

MONOGRAPHS
IN ARTISTS

10

REMBRANDT

BY

H. KNACKFUSS

150 ILLUSTRATIONS

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MONOGRAPHS ON ARTISTS

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EDITED, AND WRITTEN IN COLLABORATION WITH OTHER AUTHORS,

BY

H. KNACKFUSS

III.

REMBRANDT

BIELEFELD AND LEIPZIG
VELHAGEN & KLASING

1899

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BY

H. KNACKFUSS

TRANSLATED BY

CAMPBELL DODGSON

WITH 159 ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PICTURES ETCHINGS AND
DRAWINGS



BIELEFELD AND LEIPZIG
VELHAGEN & KLASING

1899

PRINTED BY FISCHER & WITTIG, LEIPZIG

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PORTRAIT OF REMBRANDT BY HIMSELF, painted about 1641. Buckingham Palace.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)



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REMBRANDT'S WIFE SASKIA, painted about 1640. Dresden Gallery.
(From a photograph by Braun Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

REMBRANDT.

DUTCH painting may properly be described as an outcome of the independence of Holland as a state. So long as the Netherlands formed a whole, the predominant art was that of Flanders, and there was no Dutch art to speak of, as distinct from the Flemish. But the long and bloody war against the Spanish rule led for the northern and the southern provinces respectively to very different results, and one of these results was a decided divergence in the development of art in the two regions. Still this community of origin was never entirely ignored, and Flemish and Dutch painting were in agreement in the one essential characteristic, that they sought and found the means of poetical expression in colour rather than in form. The year 1609, in which the conclusion of a truce for twelve years carried with it virtually the recognition of the seven United Provinces as an independent state, may be said to have witnessed the birth of Dutch painting, which now became a national art in a higher degree than has ever been the case elsewhere since the Christian era. An active demand for art had existed for a long time in these provinces, and the rapid increase of prosperity, which ensued from the cessation of hostilities, and which continued to grow even during the renewed struggle for liberty which did not definitely secure its end until 1648, naturally brought with it an impetus to that demand. But the Protestant state in its newly won liberty had broken with all that had hitherto offered to painting its greatest opportunities. There were no longer churches to be adorned with splendid altarpieces, or princely palaces to be painted with wanton stories of the gods and deeds of antique heroes. The artist had now to give dignity



Fig. 1. PORTRAIT OF REMBRANDT, called
"Aux trois moustaches".
Etching of the master's early period.



Fig. 2. REMBRANDT'S MOTHER. Etching of 1628.

everyday life, reflected in the eye of the artist, be the subject of the picture what it may—portrait, genre, landscape, cattle, or still-life. This straightforward depicting of reality was a large part of the art of the one painter who stands out conspicuously above a number of excellent artists as

and beauty to the comfortable domestic life of the middle class or to produce for guild-halls and council-chambers works which should depict the spirit of proud and sober citizenship without a trace of extravagance. The task to which the new nation set its artists is put very well in the words of a French writer: "It wanted its picture painted." That is, in truth, what Dutch painting amounts to: the honest, truthful picture of country, people and things, the rendering of the simple facts of the home and of



Fig. 3. REMBRANDT'S MOTHER. Etching. The Monogram is composed of R H (Rembrandt Harmensz) and L (of Leyden).

the greatest of the Dutch school. But it was not the whole of his art. Rembrandt could turn his astonishing capability for a close and intelligent rendering of nature to the service of his own free creative impulse, and found in it the means of bestowing on the figments of his lively and capricious, at times even visionary, imagination, a form which not only expressed his own temperament, but could not fail also to appeal immediately to his contemporaries and fellow-countrymen. Aided by a magnificent perfection in his mastery over the implements of his craft, which made him one of the very best painters and the most accomplished etcher of any period, he revealed himself at the same time as one of the most independent and original artists in the world.

The house of Rembrandt's parents was at Leyden, on the Weddesteeg, in the neighbourhood of the White Gate (Wittepoort). It was a mill, the property of a family which took its surname, van Ryn, from a branch of the Rhine, which flows through the town in several canals, and is the only arm of the river near its mouth which retains the name. The fifth of the six children of Harmen (Hermann) Gerritszoon (son of Gerrit or Gerard) van Ryn and

his wife Neeltje (Cornelia) Willemsdorfer was born on the 15th of July 1606 or 1607 — the year is not quite certain — and received in baptism the uncommon name of Rembrandt, so that, according to the custom which prevailed at that time in other countries besides Holland of adding the father's Christian name to that of the son, he was called Rembrandt Harmenszoon (for the sake of brevity, Harmensz) van Ryn.

Whereas Rembrandt's three elder brothers were brought up to industrial occupations, he received a more refined training. He was sent to a Latin school and was intended later on to enter the university of his native town, "to be enabled, when he had arrived at mature years,



Fig. 4. PORTRAIT OF REMBRANDT WITH THE STARING EYES. Etching.

(Also known as "The man with the mutilated cap".)



Fig. 5. A MAN WITH A BALD HEAD.
Etching of 1630.



Fig. 6. THE MAN WITH A WIDE-BRIMMED HAT.
Etching of 1630.

to benefit by his learning the town and the state". But his decided inclination and talent for painting soon led to his adoption of art as a calling. Jacob van Swanenburgh, a Leyden painter of whom hardly anything else is known, was his first teacher. After he had enjoyed this painter's instruction for three years, Rembrandt was sent to Peter Lastman at Amsterdam, by whom he is said to have been taught for six months only. Both painters had studied in Italy, a qualification which was considered absolutely indispensable in those days, and their art was dominated by the effort to imitate the Italians. Lastman had been at Rome a pupil of the Frankfort artist, Adam Elsheimer, who endeavoured to lend a peculiar charm to his small, neatly painted

pictures, by strong effects of light, produced by a lamp, a fire or the moon. However subordinate the position which Rembrandt's teachers hold in the history of art, there is no doubt that the apt pupil derived great profit from their instructions. Lastman presumably gave him lessons also in the art of etching. On returning to Leyden he pursued an independent course of training and it may be assumed that his own impulse led him to a thorough study of nature, which he can hardly have derived from his masters.

The first signed pictures of the young artist bear the date 1627. One of these, "St. Paul in prison", is in the Museum at Stuttgart, the other, "the Money-changer", in the Museum at Berlin. Both pictures are without any conspicuous charm; they are smoothly painted youthful works which make little impression on the disinterested spectator; and yet one can already see in them, as if in the germ, those qualities which later on made Rembrandt so great. The deep, thoughtful gaze of the apostle in prison proclaims the future master of the expression of soul. The little picture at Berlin attracts the beholder by the picturesque effect of light and shade, which proceeds from a candle hidden in the hand



Fig. 7. A BEARDED OLD MAN WITH A HIGH CAP. Etching.

of the money-changer, though indeed this effect reminds us more of the pictures of Gerard Honthorst, than of Rembrandt's later masterpieces. Two small pictures of biblical subjects of the year 1628, both signed R H (Rembrandt Harmensz) with L attached (in allusion to the artist's native town, Leyden) were first made known to wider circles through the exhibition of works by the old masters from private collections at Berlin, which was held at Berlin in the year 1883 in honour of the silver wedding of the Crown Prince and Princess. One, the property of the Emperor, represents the Betrayal of Samson by Delilah, the other, belonging to Herr Otto Pein, shows the



Fig. 8. A PAIR OF BEGGARS. Etching of 1630.

Apostle Peter among the servants of the High-Priest; the latter is a night-piece with effects of firelight and candlelight. A few other pictures have recently attracted attention, in which it is believed that some of the earliest works of the young Rembrandt may be seen, especially several picturesquely lighted studies of heads (at Cassel, Gotha and elsewhere), which are taken to be portraits of the artist by himself. It is true that throughout his life Rembrandt had a predilection for himself as an object of study. Did he wish to try a mode of lighting the human face, a certain expression, a becoming costume, he found in his own person an ever ready and willing model and at the same time a gratifying subject for painting, on



Fig. 9. THE WOMAN WITH A GOURD.
Etching.

account of his strong, open and attractive features and his healthy colour. That accounts for the extraordinary number of portraits of himself, painted or etched on copper, which Rembrandt has left us.

The first dated work of Rembrandt's etching-point (1628) makes us acquainted with the venerable aspect of his mother. This exquisite little bust, so expressive and lifelike, so cleverly and at the same time so lovingly drawn, is a perfect masterpiece, unsurpassable in execution as well as in idea (Fig. 2). In addition to this little bust, Rembrandt several times during the earliest years of his working for publication recorded in etchings the peculiar beauty of his aged mother. One of these is specially noteworthy (that described as "with the black veil"), which shows the old lady from the side, sitting at a table; one cannot but be astonished to see how vividly the expressive face, furrowed by countless wrinkles, is drawn once more with more elaboration of picturesque effect; how marvellously the shrunken skin of the old hands with the prominent veins is rendered, and in what a masterly style the stuffs are treated.



Fig. 10. THE MAN WITH A FUR CAP. Etching of 1631.

To learn the manner in which the soul of man is mirrored in his countenance and how the play of the muscles of the face is transmuted into the expression of emotion, was for Rembrandt from the first an object

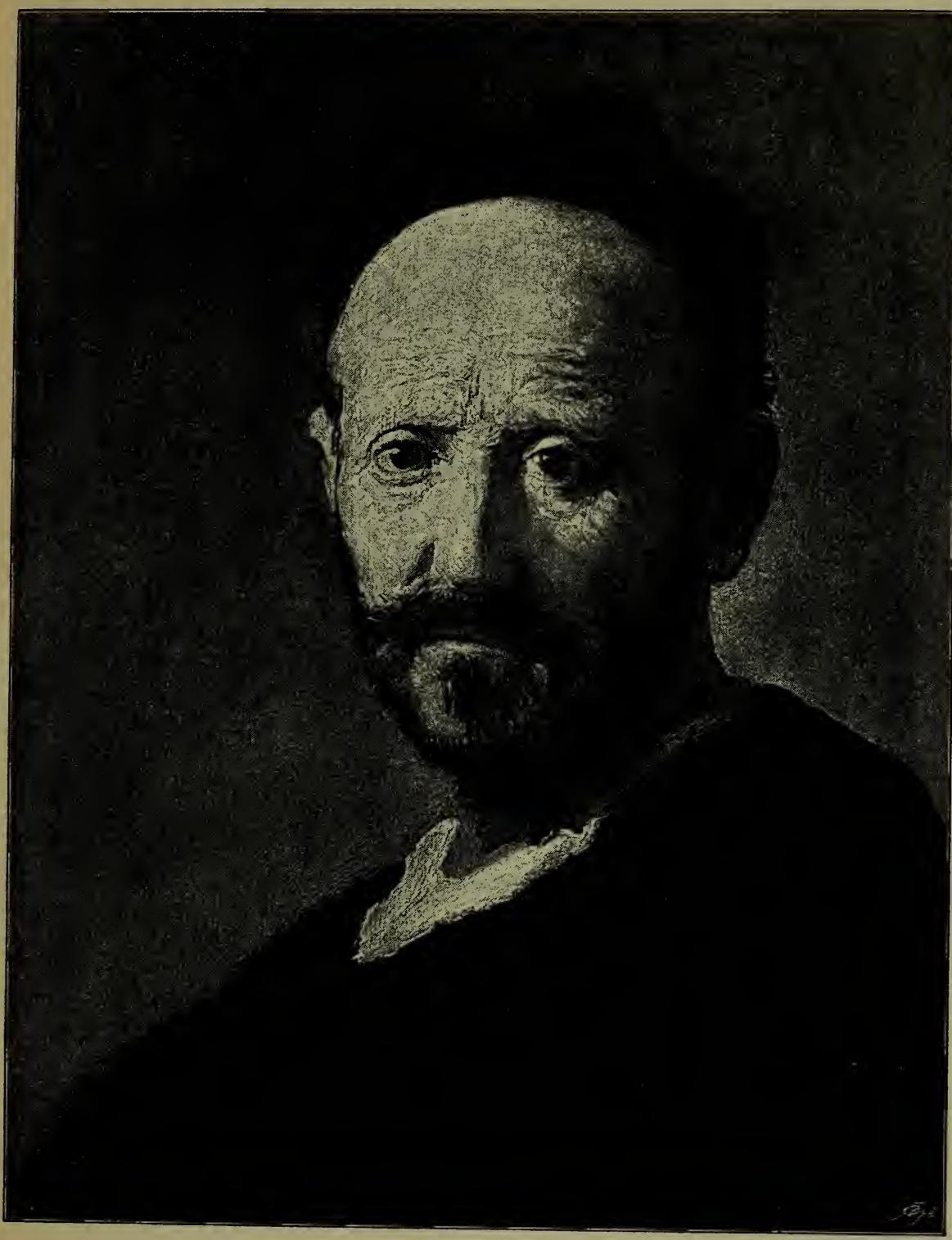


Fig. II. PORTRAIT OF AN OLD MAN (REMBRANDT'S FATHER), a study painted about 1631.
In the Royal Gallery, Cassel.
(From a photograph by Franz Hanfstängl, Munich.)

of the keenest observation. In order to study it thoroughly, he sat down before a mirror with the copper-plate in his hand, and himself put on some definite expression, which he then perpetuated with the etching-point.



Fig. 12. BEGGAR. Etching.

In this way he drew himself laughing; with an expression of annoyance; with a reserved and gloomy look, and with an expression of staring terror (Fig. 4); but he also handed down to posterity on the copper-plate his young and cheerful countenance not yet burdened with the cares of life, with the beard just beginning to grow, in the tranquillity of its natural expression (Fig. 1). Persons of his own surroundings, who probably had no idea of ordering an engraved likeness of their features, but were good-natured enough to sit still for an hour or two to oblige the young artist, were further objects on which to practise his eye and hand (Fig. 5 and 6).

A number of etchings bear further witness to Rembrandt's diligent practice in arresting with the greatest imaginable rapidity and in a few telling lines something that he had seen casually, or perhaps in reproducing it from memory. He took a special delight in odd characters from

the lowest strata of society, who displayed their peculiarities with the least possible concealment, and whose ragged clothing as well as their ugliness appealed to him in a special way because it afforded such an opportunity for characteristic treatment. The art which imitated the Italian style had become cold and empty in the craving for beauty of external form, and was, in consequence, ceasing to be attractive. The natural reaction declared itself in this way, not, indeed, first of all in Rembrandt, but in no one else, perhaps, so powerfully. He was struck one day by the cunning eyes of some old beggar in an absurdly high cap, or by a couple of beggars keeping up a long-winded



Fig. 13.
PEASANT HOLDING HIS HANDS BEHIND HIS BACK
Etching of 1631.



Fig. 14. THE HOLY FAMILY. Picture of 1631 in the Pinakothek, Munich.
(From a photograph by Franz Hanfstaengl, Munich.)

conversation in the street or by some such ragged beings, and he fixed them on the spot in an etching; or it amused him to make a record of the look of a peasant, who conceals his craftiness under an expression of incredible stupidity (Fig. 7—9, 12, 13). But the etching-needle was also used to jot down compositions in which the young man's creative impulse was finding vent (Fig. 16).

The young painter did not lack commissions. As early as the year 1630 there is a portrait of an old gentleman dressed in black velvet and wearing a double gold chain by way of ornament, who evidently belonged to the upper classes. This picture (in the Gallery at Cassel) also bears witness by its freedom and ease of handling to the rapidity with which Rembrandt perfected himself in oil-painting. Several studies of heads painted about the same time, which are preserved in different collections, tell of the industry and conscientiousness with which he made his experiments, and excite our highest admiration by the intelligent way in which they are conceived and executed (Fig. 11).

In the year 1631 Rembrandt left his native town of Leyden, to which he only returned occasionally on short visits, and removed to Amsterdam, the proud and wealthy capital of the United Provinces, where there could not fail to be a most fertile field for him to work in. As a matter of fact the young man of four-and-twenty soon gained a great reputation in the city, and it was not long before a group of pupils gathered round him. It is related that he made them work in separate cells, with the object of better preserving the individuality of their talents and guarding their art against the tendencies of a school.

At Amsterdam Rembrandt's fondness for getting artistic charm out of subjects which are in themselves ugly was easily indulged. The Jews' quarter with its picturesque sights attracted him especially. Here the most interesting models were to be had for money, and Rembrandt took a true delight in immortalising characteristic Jewish heads. The costume of the Amsterdam Jews was in itself sufficiently striking, but he was fond of enriching it in a fantastic way by brightly coloured stuffs and numerous bits of decoration from the stock in his studio (Fig. 10). For Rembrandt's studio gradually became a regular collection of picturesque valuables and curious pieces of costume. There were, probably, nowhere better opportunities for acquiring such things than in Amsterdam, where merchants flocked together from all the ends of the earth, and where the old-clothes shops of the Jewish quarter, through which Rembrandt was so fond of strolling, invited and encouraged such a hobby. However, it was not merely for the sake of their picturesque and characteristic outward appearance that Rembrandt sought for Jewish models as profitable suggestions for etchings and painted studies. He also perceived in them the representatives of the Chosen People; it was by a kind of historical conscientiousness that he regarded them as the only genuine models for scriptural compositions, and conscientiousness was the very fundamental principle of



Fig. 15. PORTRAIT OF A POLISH NOBLEMAN, painted in 1631. In the Hermitage, St Petersburg.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)



Fig. 16. A FIGHT. Etching.

Dutch art. The venerable aspect of the Patriarchs of old was called to life before him and he attempted, if not at first in paintings, at any rate in drawings, which he made only for his own use, to picture events of patriarchal life in a manner which seemed to be the immediate presentation of actual fact. We have an example in a pen drawing in the Albertina at Vienna, apparently produced in this early period, which represents Jacob holding his son Benjamin lovingly between his knees, whilst Judah approaches him and says: "Send the lad with me; I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him" (Fig. 17).

The first biblical subject of any importance which Rembrandt painted was a "Presentation in the Temple", now in the Royal Picture-Gallery at the Hague, dated 1631. As compared with the early efforts of the Leyden period it shows an enormous advance. The subject is the same as that of the first dated composition of several figures among Rembrandt's etchings. Perhaps the latter was a preparatory exercise for the picture. The delicately executed little print, of the year 1630, is remarkable for the depth and variety of expression in the little figures; it is further described as "with the angel", because an angel passes in his flight over the figure of Anna, and reveals to the aged prophetess that the little child is the Redeemer. In a later and larger etching of the same subject—for Rembrandt liked, when once he had taken up a subject, to enter into it again and again—the tall, solemn form of Anna appears again, in the centre of the composition, and indeed as the chief figure in it; a dark cloud descends from

above into the dim vaults of the Temple, a ray of light breaks in from the side, and where the two meet the Dove of the Holy Spirit rests over the head of the old prophetess. This etching remained unfinished, in part merely begun in slight outline; but even so it gives an impression of great power by the highly poetical effects of light; the head of the aged Simeon is in itself a masterpiece beyond compare. In the painting of 1631 Simeon is the principal actor in the scene, according to the generally accepted treatment of the subject. The picture, carried out on a small scale with the greatest care, reveals the painter as the incomparable master of chia-

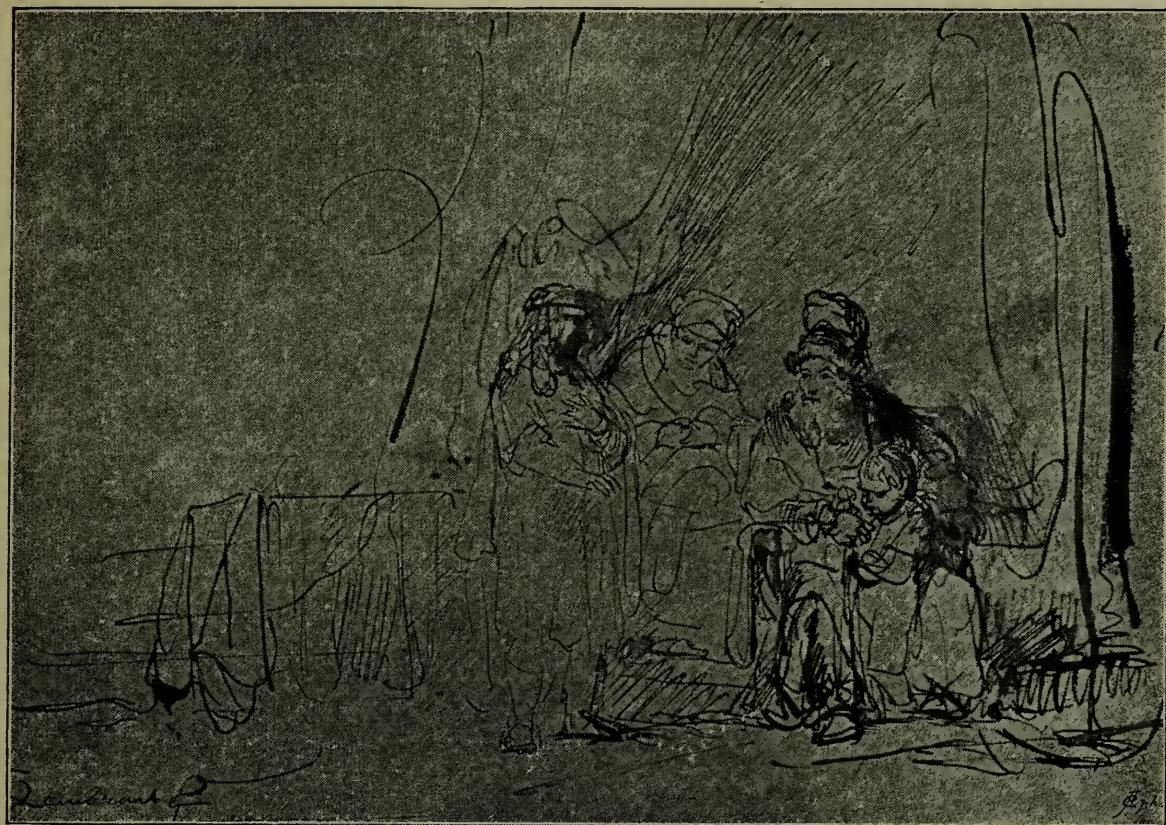


Fig. 17. JUDAH, JACOB AND BENJAMIN. Drawing in the Albertina, Vienna.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

roscuro who finds in interrupting dense masses of shadow by radiant waves of light the means of giving intense utterance to his poetical emotions. While the fantastic forms of the architecture of the Temple are sunk in darkness, the light is concentrated on the principal group; it irradiates with its brilliance the Infant Jesus, the venerable head of Simeon and the hand of the Chief Priest, which is raised in benediction, and it glances, somewhat diminished in strength, over the kneeling form of Mary and the forms of her companions, till it is gradually lost once more in darkness. The incident itself is thought out in quite a realistic spirit, and no supernatural phenomena are introduced. The picture in so far agrees with the etching of 1630, that in the background is seen a great staircase on which many figures are moving in deep shadow.



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Fig. 18. DIANA AND ENDYMION. Liechtenstein Gallery, Vienna.
(From a photograph by Franz Hanfstaengl, Munich.)

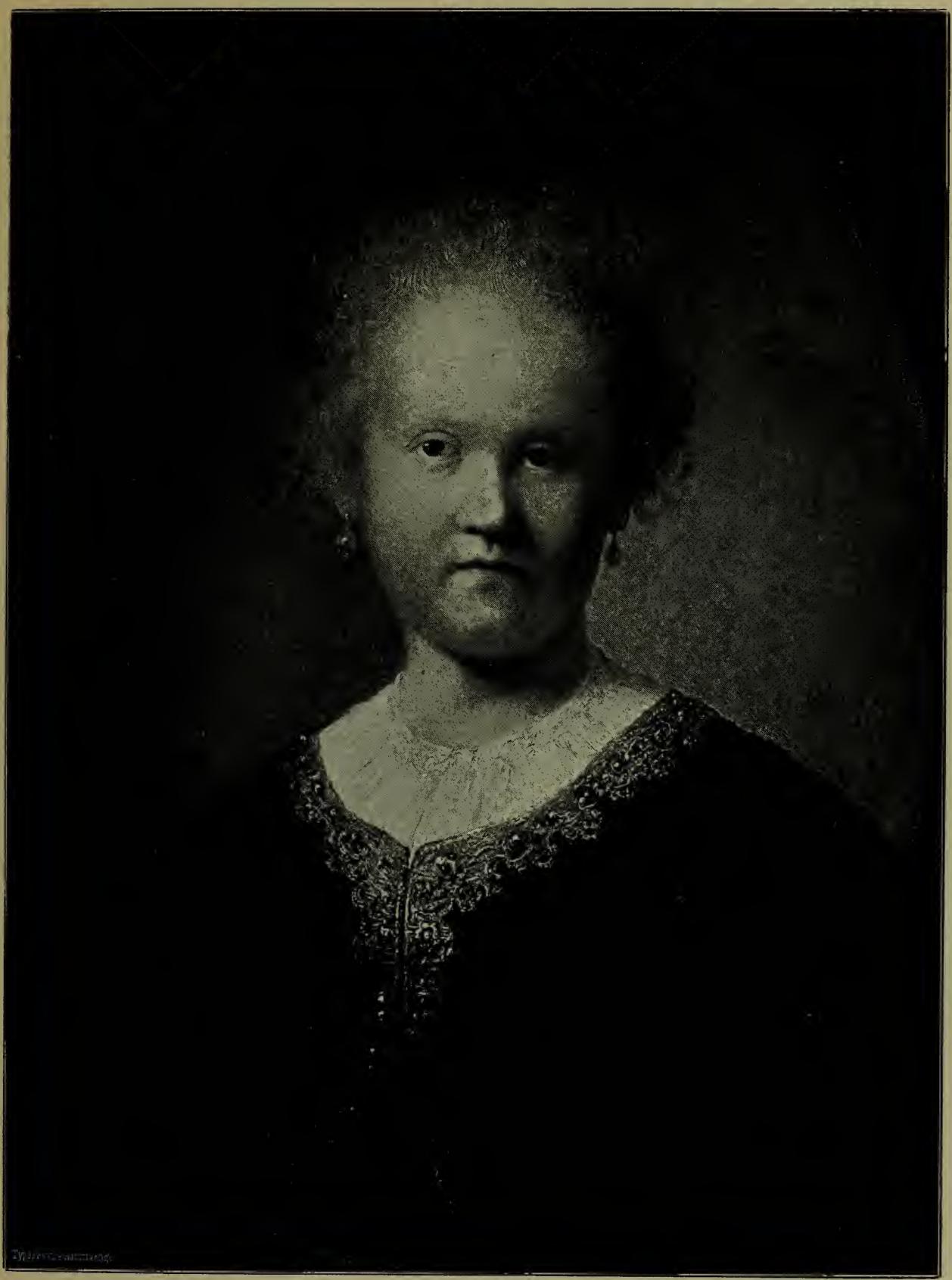


Fig. 19. REMBRANDT'S SISTER. Liechtenstein Gallery, Vienna.
(From a photograph by Franz Hanfstängl, Munich.)

This picture is the first of the stately series of Rembrandt's masterpieces in painting. The most prominent feature in Rembrandt's character was an inexhaustible delight in work; throughout his life, in weal and woe, he worked with indefatigable industry. Thus it was possible for him to leave behind him considerably more than three hundred pictures, without counting those of which the authenticity is questionable and some which have perished. To these must be added an equally large number (353) of original etchings. Since he was fond of dating his works, his career can be followed almost step by step till towards the end of his life.

The year 1631 witnessed the production of another picture besides the "Presentation in the Temple", of which the subject was drawn from the Gospels, namely the "Holy Family" in the Pinakothek at Munich. It is a beautiful and affecting picture. The child which lies on its mother's lap has just let go her breast and fallen asleep; Mary contemplates it with the quiet smile of motherly joy; near Mary is the cradle with white sheets; Joseph bends across it with a look of thoughtful contemplation (Fig. 14).

One of the first of the portraits painted at Amsterdam is that of a proud and spirited looking man with a large moustache (in the Hermitage, St. Petersburg). He wears a mantle trimmed with fur and a rich gold chain by way of ornament, a fur cap similarly decorated, and pearl ear-rings in his ears, and holds a stick with an ornamental gold knob. He is apparently a Polish nobleman who had come on his travels on some occasion to Amsterdam — then the centre of the world's traffic (Fig. 15).

Among Rembrandt's etchings of the year 1631 there is one which is remarkable on account of its subject. It is a "Diana at the Bath". The title is naturally suggestive of a beauty with classic features or at least of some austere but youthful being. Rembrandt, however, has drawn his Diana with repulsive fidelity to nature from a downright ugly model no longer in her prime. He had no sense whatever of what we call the beautiful, as the term was understood in Greek art. If we understand by the Renaissance, in the stricter use of the term, the ennobling of art by acquaintance with antique beauty, then for Rembrandt the Renaissance had never existed at all; he once said to a friend, pointing to his collection of old stuffs, arms and bric-a-brac: "These are my antiques". So, too, Rembrandt's mythological compositions make a very curious impression on us — to say the least. He did not produce many of them, it is true. The international art of the time, including the school from which Rembrandt proceeded, was, indeed, dominated by a taste for subjects from the pagan mythology. But such matters were quite alien to Rembrandt's nature, and his knowledge of them can hardly be supposed to have been great; his book was the Bible and it does not seem as if he can have read very much of anything else. Besides, his fellow-countrymen, like himself, had ceased to care much for mythology; pictures of the fables related of the heathen divinities could not appeal to the Dutch people's sober sense and Protestant strictness of belief.

Perhaps the prettiest subject from mythology which Rembrandt ever treated is the picture of "Diana and Endymion" in the Liechtenstein Gallery at Vienna. The chaste goddess has descended to earth, hovering



Fig. 20. THE ANATOMY LESSON. Painting of 1632, in the Royal Gallery, the Hague.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

in the flood of moonlight; the swans which have carried her shine through the dim air like shapes of cloud lit up by the moon. With the hunting-spear in her hand, tall and stately, she advances towards the shy lad who has gained her favour. The light which radiates from her falls on his

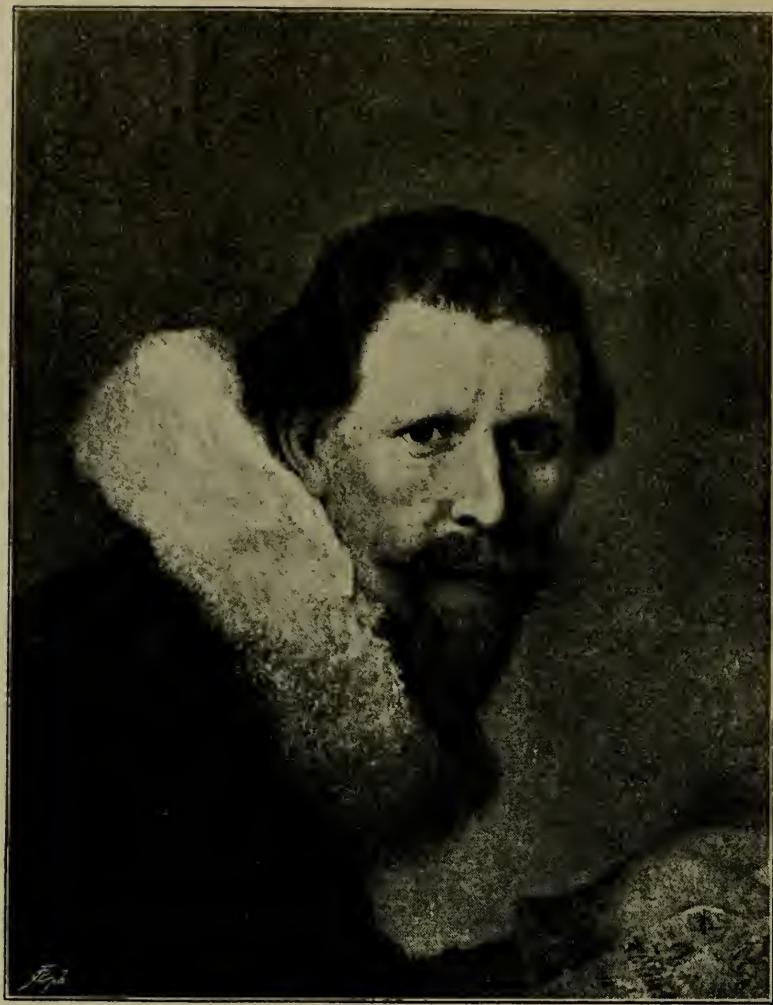


Fig. 21. HEAD OF ONE OF THE AUDIENCE, from the "Anatomy Lesson" at the Hague.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

face, as he looks round at her, roused from his wonted slumber, while his uncouth dogs growl suspiciously at those of the celestial huntress (Fig. 18).

The face of the goddess in this picture shows an unmistakeable resemblance to that of a girl with blonde, almost auburn colouring, whom Rembrandt painted repeatedly in the years 1632 and 1633. This girl is supposed with great probability to be one of his sisters, who had perhaps removed with him to Amsterdam (Fig. 19).

In 1632 Rembrandt ventured on a mythological subject with many figures, the "Rape of Proserpine", now in the Berlin Museum. This remarkable picture reveals most significantly Rembrandt's excellences and peculiarities as an artist in colour, effect, sentiment and expression. Like all the works of this early period, it is painted with great care and delicacy. The plants in the foreground, in which one can distinguish every little vein on the leaves, are astonishing, while the little heads, about an inch high, and the rich stuffs, are carried out in extreme detail with just the same exactness. In spite of this almost laborious handling, the picture is yet full of genuine vigour and life. The black horses of Hades rush like a fleeting vision into the reeking pit; a cloud of black vapour lies in

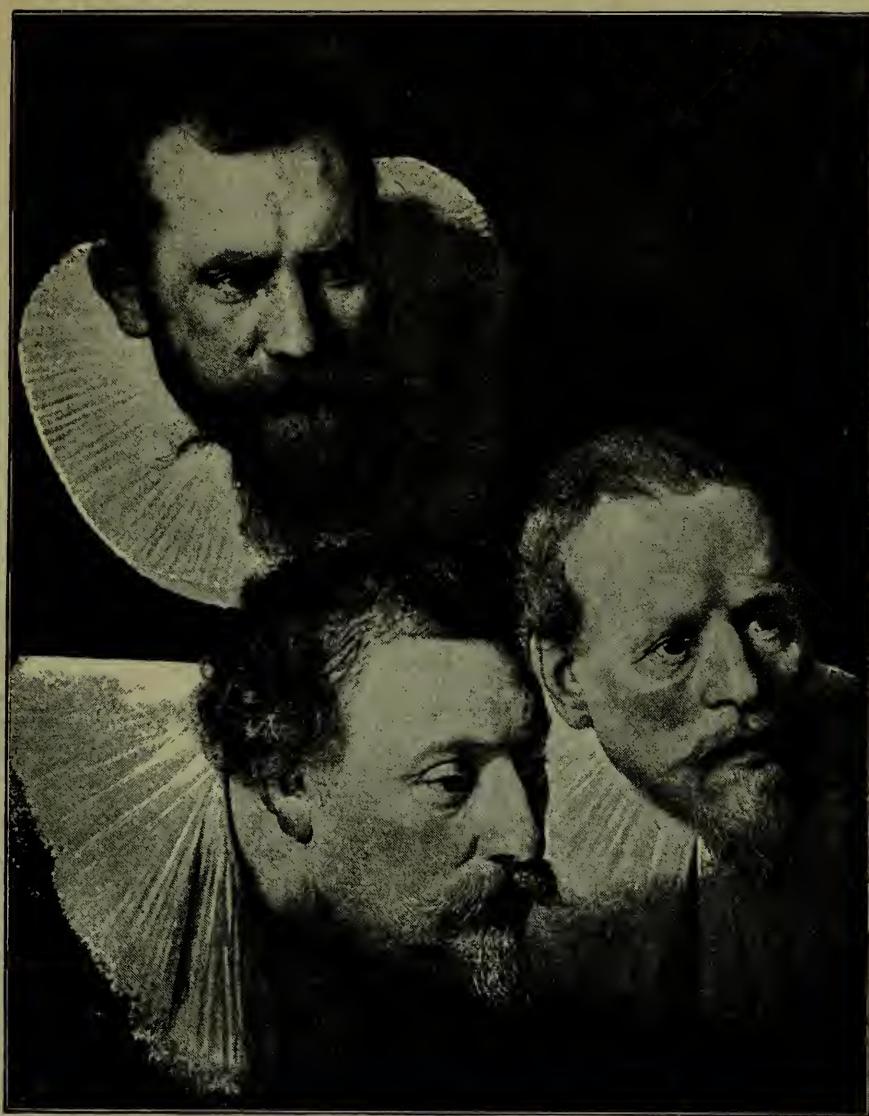


Fig. 22. HEADS OF THREE OF THE AUDIENCE, from the "Anatomy Lesson" at the Hague.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

a thick mass under the blue of the sky over the entrance to the cleft. Proserpine scratches and hits her ravisher in the face; her playfellows in their terror try to hold her back by her garment, and to drag her from the golden chariot, which moves so rapidly that their mad effort to keep up with it is useless.

In the same year, 1632, Rembrandt painted a larger picture, which has excited the highest admiration both of his contemporaries and of later ages. This was the "Anatomy Lesson". After the dissection of human bodies for the purposes of instruction was legalized in 1555, it became usual in several of the Dutch towns to permit regular public lectures on anatomy to take place. These lectures were held in halls designed especially for the purpose, which were fitted up accordingly, and sometimes, according to our ideas, in a very curious way. One such "Theatrum Anatomicum", for instance, displayed on the low wall which formed the boundary of the auditorium a representation of the Fall of Man composed of skeletons.

As a rule these halls were adorned with portraits of the surgeons of repute who had lived in the town to which the hall belonged. There was, generally speaking, a taste in Holland for a peculiar kind of portrait-painting, the corporation-picture, and so the surgeons, like other professions, were fond of having their portraits combined in a general group, of which the professor explaining the body or skeleton formed the central figure. Such was the



Fig. 23. THE PROFESSOR LECTURING (Dr Nicolaes Tulp),
from the "Anatomy Lesson" at the Hague.

(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

task which was set to Rembrandt, by this time a portrait-painter of repute, when he was commissioned to paint the portrait of Nicolaes Tulp, professor of anatomy, together with the seven directors of the Amsterdam guild of surgeons. Rembrandt contrived in the most masterly way to create from the juxtaposition of a number of portraits a single work of art, complete in itself and fascinating merely as a composition; in short, a picture in the best sense of the word. The body, seen from below and foreshortened, lies on a table; the upper part of it is brightly illuminated and thus forms

a mass of light to balance the faces with the white collars which emerge singly from the dark clothes and the dark backgrounds. Tulp, who has his hat on his head, whilst his audience round him are bare-headed, has

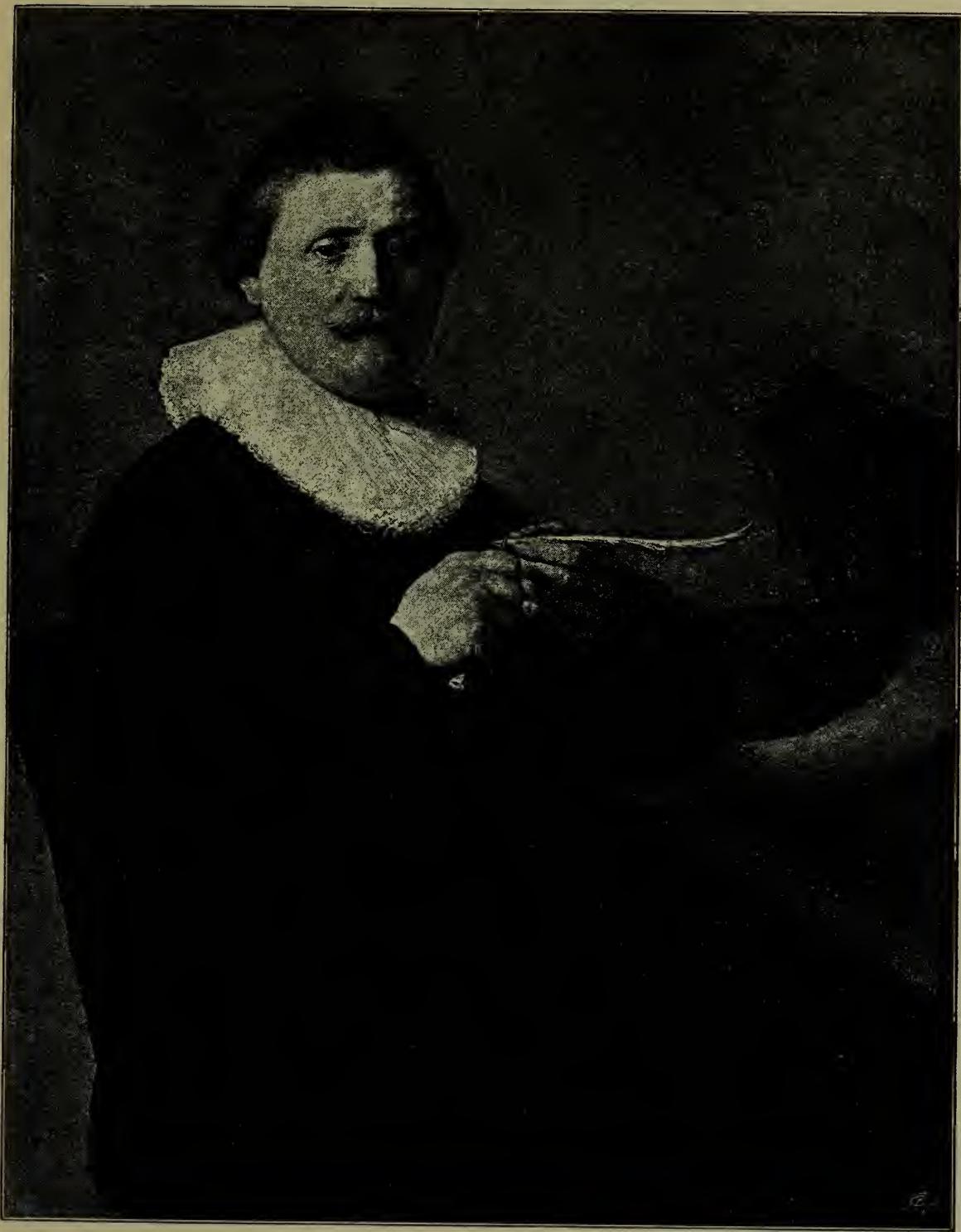


Fig. 24. THE MAN MENDING A PEN (said to be the portrait of the writing-master and accountant Coppenol of Amsterdam). Cassel Gallery.
(From a photograph by Franz Hanfstängl, Munich.)

stripped the skin off the left fore-arm of the corpse, and is explaining the muscles of this limb; he is just raising one of the flexor muscles of the fingers, and illustrating the work which this muscle performs in life by bending the fingers of his own left hand. We feel how the anatomist



Fig. 25. THE PERSIAN. Etching of 1632.

almost unconsciously brings into play in his own body the muscles of which he is speaking, and we admire Rembrandt's fine and acute observation. The directors of the guild of surgeons, partly sitting, partly pressing forward, follow the professor's lecture with different degrees of attention (Fig. 20). The latter's head is a masterpiece of portraiture (Fig. 23). If the same cannot be said of all the heads of the listeners, still among these, too, some are quite excellent and all are full of life from within (Fig. 21 and 22). The picture long remained in its original situation, in the "Snykamer" (Dissecting-room) at Amsterdam; in 1828 King William I. purchased it from the guild of surgeons for 32,000 florins, and it became a part of the collection of pictures at the Hague.

The "Anatomy Lesson" certainly contributed much to the increase of Rembrandt's fame as a portrait-painter. There are records of more than ten portraits of individuals painted by him to order during the year 1632, of which the most excellent, perhaps, is the masterly and lifelike portrait of a man cutting a pen, said to be the writing-master Coppenol of Amsterdam, now in the Picture-gallery at Cassel (Fig. 24).

Meanwhile Rembrandt was not leaving his etching-point unemployed. He pursued his studies from the life indefatigably, and, besides figures from the populace, he occasionally recorded some strange and outlandish apparition, like that of the curiously-dressed man who is known to print-collectors as "The Persian" (Fig. 25). Much that he saw in the streets of the town or on countrywalks he turned to account in delicate genre-subjects, to which he gave an imperishable charm by their highly artistic execution. A choice example is that of the "Vendor of rat's bane". It is a frightful ruffian that we see moving from house to house along a village street, with a sabre at his side and a pole in his hand with a basket at the top, from which dead rats dangle down, whilst a live rat clammers round the edge and another of the creatures sits on the man's shoulder, to give visible evidence of his power over their kind. Almost more frightful than the rat-catcher is his companion, the boy with the box of poison, the very picture of physical and mental degeneracy; we understand the gesture of repulsion with which the old Jew, who leans over the lower portion of his door and looks out into the street, rejects the hand which offers him the rat's bane (Fig. 26).

An example of a different class is the touching figure of the blind fiddler led by his little dog (Fig. 27). In all



Fig. 26. THE SELLER OF RAT'S BANE.
Etching of 1632.



Fig. 27. THE BLIND FIDDLER.
Etching.



Fig. 28. ST. JEROME PRAYING. Etching of 1632.

his scenes Rembrandt reveals not only the gift of characterising to the life the persons whom he has seen or imagined, but also the still more incomparable gift of making the beholder read on the persons' faces what their thoughts are at the given moment and of giving expression to the most delicate emotions of the soul as well as to its strongest passions. He never adds anything to the scene to make its effect either humorous or grave; he always gives just the thing as it is, and so directly does he reproduce what he has seen, whether in his mind's eye or in reality, with keen and accurate vision, that what is comic makes a comic effect, what is serious a serious one, in his pictorial rendering, just as it does in life. It is this profound grasp of the subject which gives such a high value to Rembrandt's religious scenes also, though their external form may strike us as curious, because we are so unaccustomed to it. Never, perhaps, were the feelings of a man who prayed in fervent supplication for enlightenment expressed more profoundly or with more clearness and simplicity than in the etching of 1632, "St. Jerome" (Fig. 28). The same piece, carried out with a light and rapid hand, enables us to appreciate Rembrandt's great ability in the treatment of landscape.

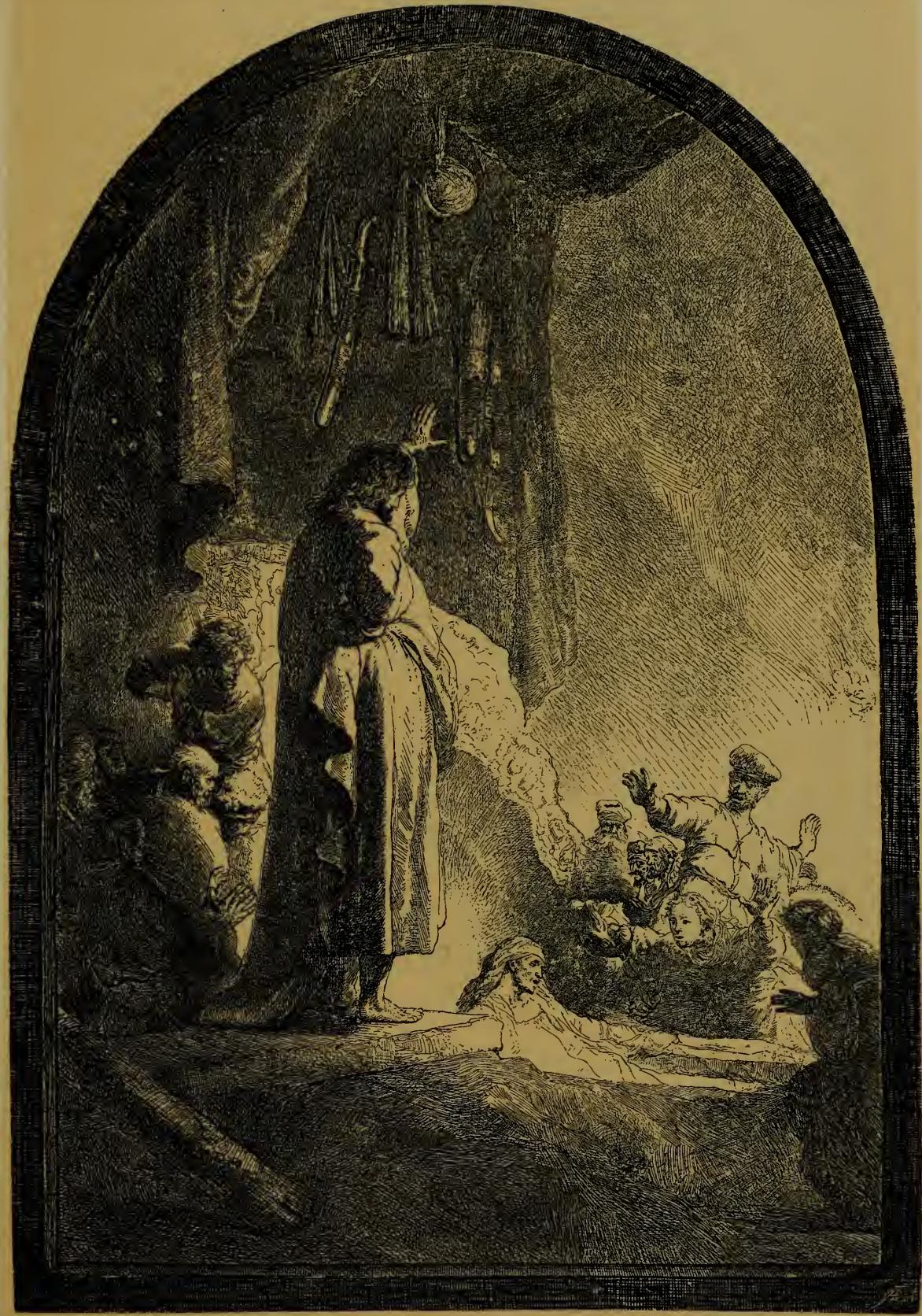
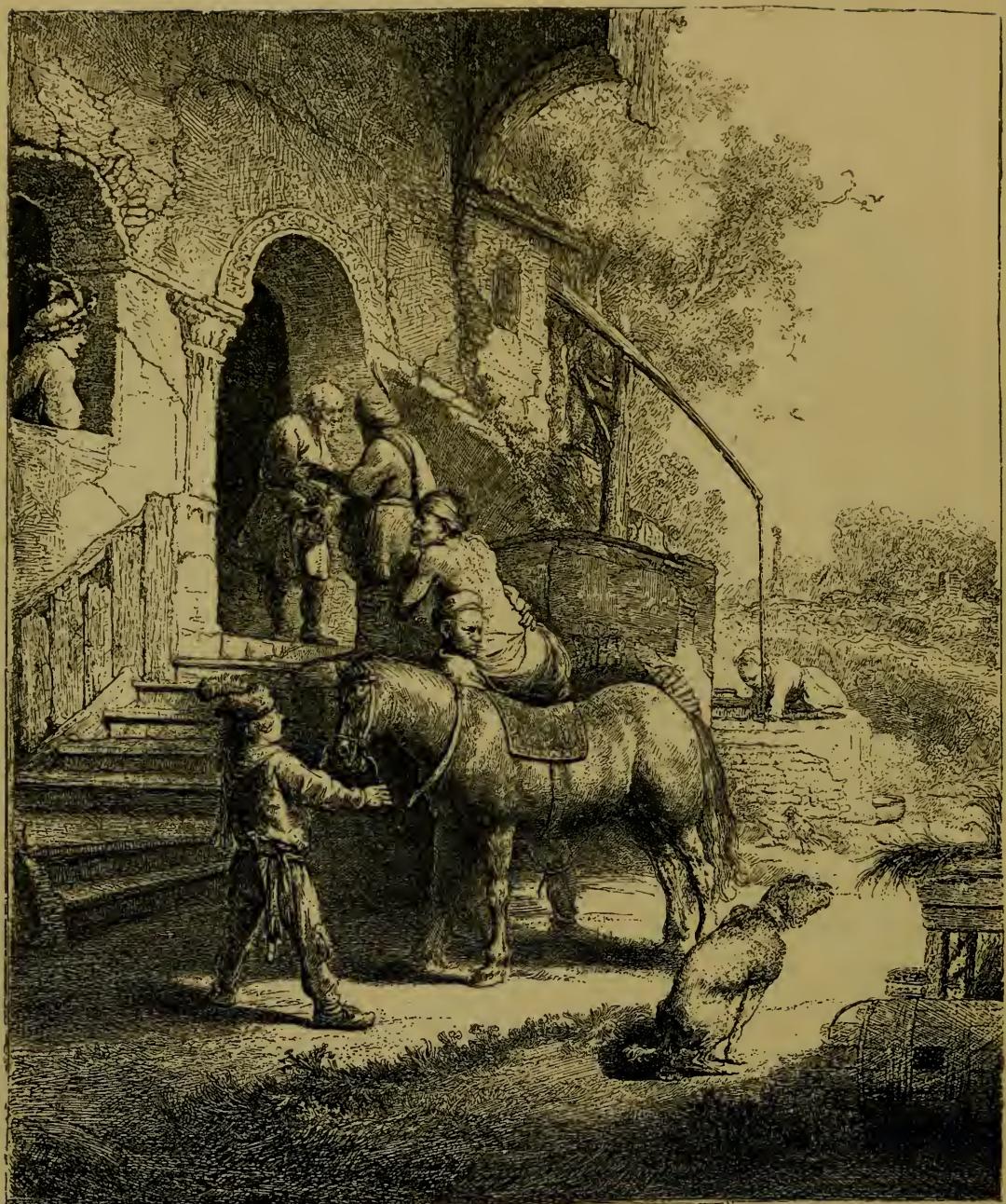


Fig. 29. THE LARGE RAISING OF LAZARUS. Etching (greatly reduced).



Rembrandt invenerit. 1633.

Fig. 30. THE GOOD SAMARITAN. Etching of 1633.

Now that he had acquired an unrivalled dexterity in handling the etching-point, Rembrandt was no longer contented with etching studies and compositions on a small scale and intended more for his own use than for others. He began to publish large, carefully executed and effective etchings of biblical subjects. At the head of these stands the "Large Raising of Lazarus", so called to distinguish it from a later and smaller etching of the same subject. This is an expression of the boldest and most powerful fancy, strange at first sight, but immediately impressive by the picturesque effect of light and shade, while it holds us spellbound when we look at it more closely. We find ourselves in a space of fantastic



Fig. 31. THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT. Etching of 1633.

design; the building in which the sepulchre is placed is hung with curtains and the walls are adorned with the weapons of the deceased; the earth has been shovelled aside from the actual grave, so that the narrow bed of stone is laid bare; the curtains at the entrance are drawn back, so that a full flood of light pours from without upon the darkness of the tomb. The Saviour has stepped on a slab which lies across the floor up to the edge of the grave, and with sublime tranquillity, merely by a majestic movement of the hand, he summons the dead man, who begins to rise slowly, as if a dream were heavy upon him. His sisters hasten to meet him as he rises from the dead, one still in hesitation, the other spreading out her arms in joy. The other persons present look on in amazement at the incredible thing which has come to pass; no artist has ever more convincingly rendered the manifold expressions of extreme astonishment at what passes comprehension (Fig. 29). This has always been among those of Rembrandt's etching which are most sought after. The drapery of Christ should be noticed; drawn more severely, with more of the grand style about it, if that much abused expression may be permitted, than is usually the case with Rembrandt, it still betrays the after-effects of the Italian school on which Rembrandt's teachers had formed themselves.

Whereas here, in the representation of a miracle, Rembrandt gave free play to his poetical imagination, he attempted in other cases to win credence

for the biblical narrative by depicting its incidents with extreme fidelity to nature and bringing out their human interest for himself and the spectator. An example is the etching of 1633, "The Good Samaritan", which is also carried out on a fairly large scale. This is not among Rembrandt's happiest creations; we are offended, especially, by the very Dutch build of the horse from which the wounded man is being lifted down. But the master's purpose of giving such a shape to the product of his own imagination, as



Fig. 32. REMBRANDT WITH THE SCARF ROUND HIS NECK.
Portrait of the master by himself, etched in 1633.

if he were just reproducing something that he had actually seen, is admirably realised; in this sense even the ugly dog in the foreground is not without significance; it helps to produce an appearance of the whole being, so to speak, an instantaneous picture from life (Fig. 30). Without the very slightest notion of idealising the outward form, Rembrandt pictured to himself the sacred figures just as he saw the poor and needy in actual life around him. This is declared to us very eloquently by the delicate little etching of the same year, "The Flight into Egypt". It would be impossible to imagine the foster-father Joseph with less of nobility in his outward appearance. But Rembrandt produces his effects, not by physical,

but by moral beauty. Perhaps a nobler figure would not manifest such warm and profound feeling as this poor artisan, who seeks anxiously to bring his beloved ones to a place of safety, and with beating heart and trembling knees leads the ass by the hand with ever hastening steps over the rough forest-paths. Mary's face is but slightly drawn, yet what a strife is expressed in it between fear and confidence in her guide, as she sits wrapped in a large cloak, holding the child, carefully covered up, in her arms, on the ass laden with its scanty burden. The landscape, too, is a gem of charming design; we feel that the light of day, which casts long shadows before the



Fig. 33. ADVERSE FORTUNE. Etching of 1632. (Second state.)

wayfarers, is nearly spent, and that the fugitives will soon be surrounded by the terrors of darkness (Fig. 31). In several other designs representing the Flight into Egypt, a subject which Rembrandt treated repeatedly, the artist places the scene after nightfall. There we see Joseph trying to light up the uneven path by the scanty rays of a flickering lantern, and, once more, the fugitives, their strength used up, are resting under a tree; the lantern is hung on a bough, and illumines the branches thick with leaves and the weary travellers with its unsteady light.

Rembrandt etched a portrait of himself in 1633 in the guise of a study in lighting. The light falls sharply on his back, and we see him with his face entirely in shadow, from which only the eyes shine out brightly; his hair, with the light glancing on it, hangs down in long and tangled locks on his shoulders (Fig. 32). We read in most impressions of

this etching, which is usually named after the scarf which the artist has wound about his neck, a date which seems to be quite distinctly 1653; but the figure which appears to be 5 is a 3 which has lost (as the plate became worn, the top stroke which was brought out quite clearly in the earliest impressions).

Rembrandt now began to obtain orders for etchings as well as pictures. An Amsterdam bookseller gave him a commission to prepare the frontispiece for a work which was published in the following year (1634): "De Zee-



Fig. 34. JAN CORNELISZ SILVIUS, PREACHER AT AMSTERDAM.
Etching of 1633. (The very scarce first state.)

vaert lof" (The Praise of Seafaring), and Rembrandt executed for this purpose the plate known as "Adverse Fortune". In a bark full of happy people, in full activity and enjoyment, Fortune stands, holding the mast and sail of the vessel; she turns her back to the spectator, and also to a rider crowned with laurel, whose horse has fallen down and who looks sorrowfully round at the vessel as it sails away; behind him we see a large column with the double face of Janus looking forwards and backwards, and, at a greater distance, a temple, on the steps of which a throng of people is assembled. The subject refers, as the accompanying text explains, to the battle of Actium, and the fallen hero is Antony (Fig. 33).

Persons of note, of whom a large circle of people desired to possess a likeness, chose to have their portraits engraved, according to the fashion which had come in at the beginning of the sixteenth century; or, if they

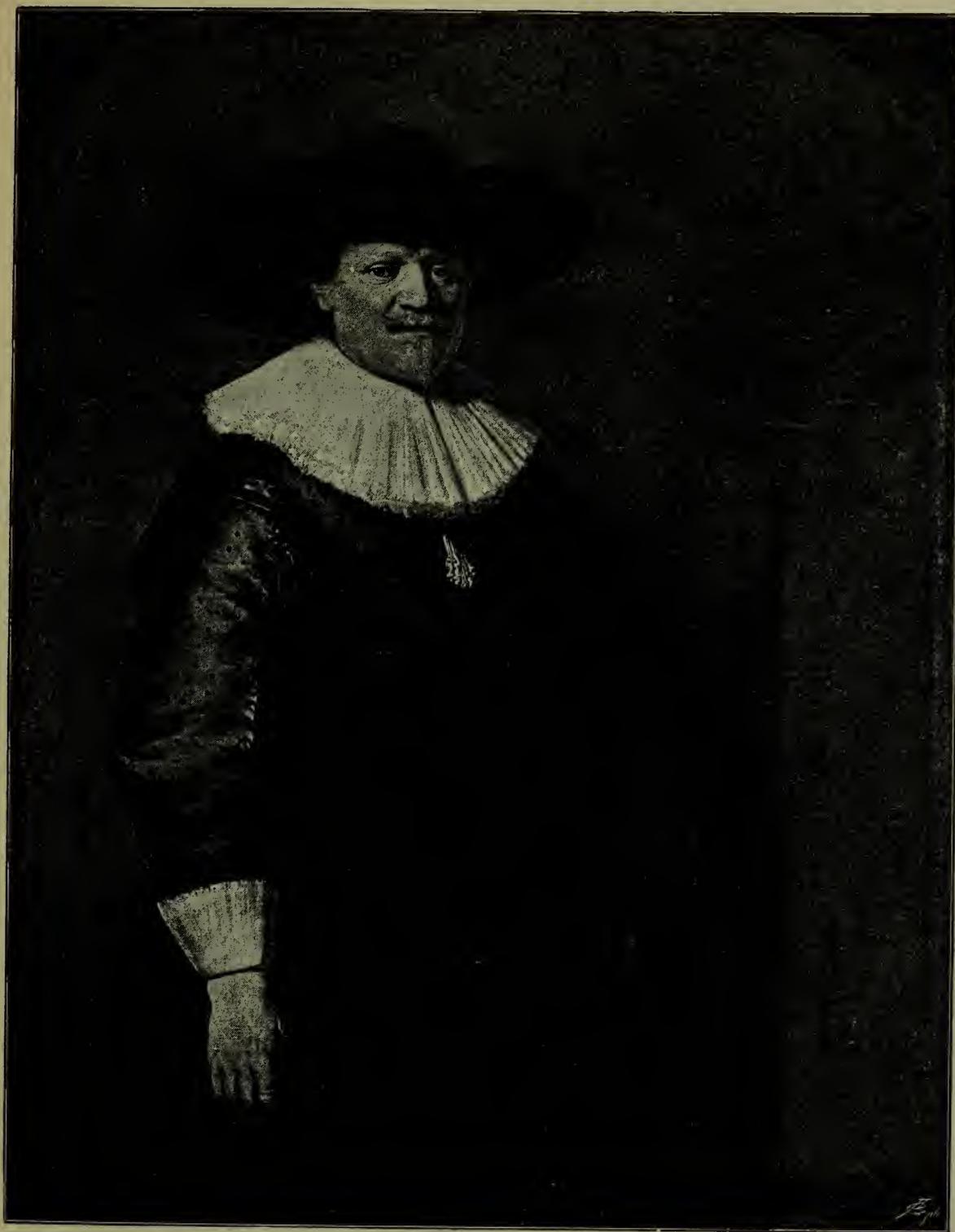


Fig. 35. THE POET JAN HARMENSZ KRUL, painted in 1633. In the Royal Picture-gallery at Cassel.
(From a photograph by Franz Hanfstängl, Munich.)

did not do so themselves, their friends perhaps occasioned such a likeness to be taken. It was natural that a portrait-painter like Rembrandt, who handled the etching-point so dexterously, should receive plenty of such commissions. He made a start with the portrait of the Preacher Jan

Cornelisz Silvius (Janus Silvius), etched in 1633. It goes without saying that such an etching had to be finished in quite a different way and made into more of a picture than when the artist was etching a head from life

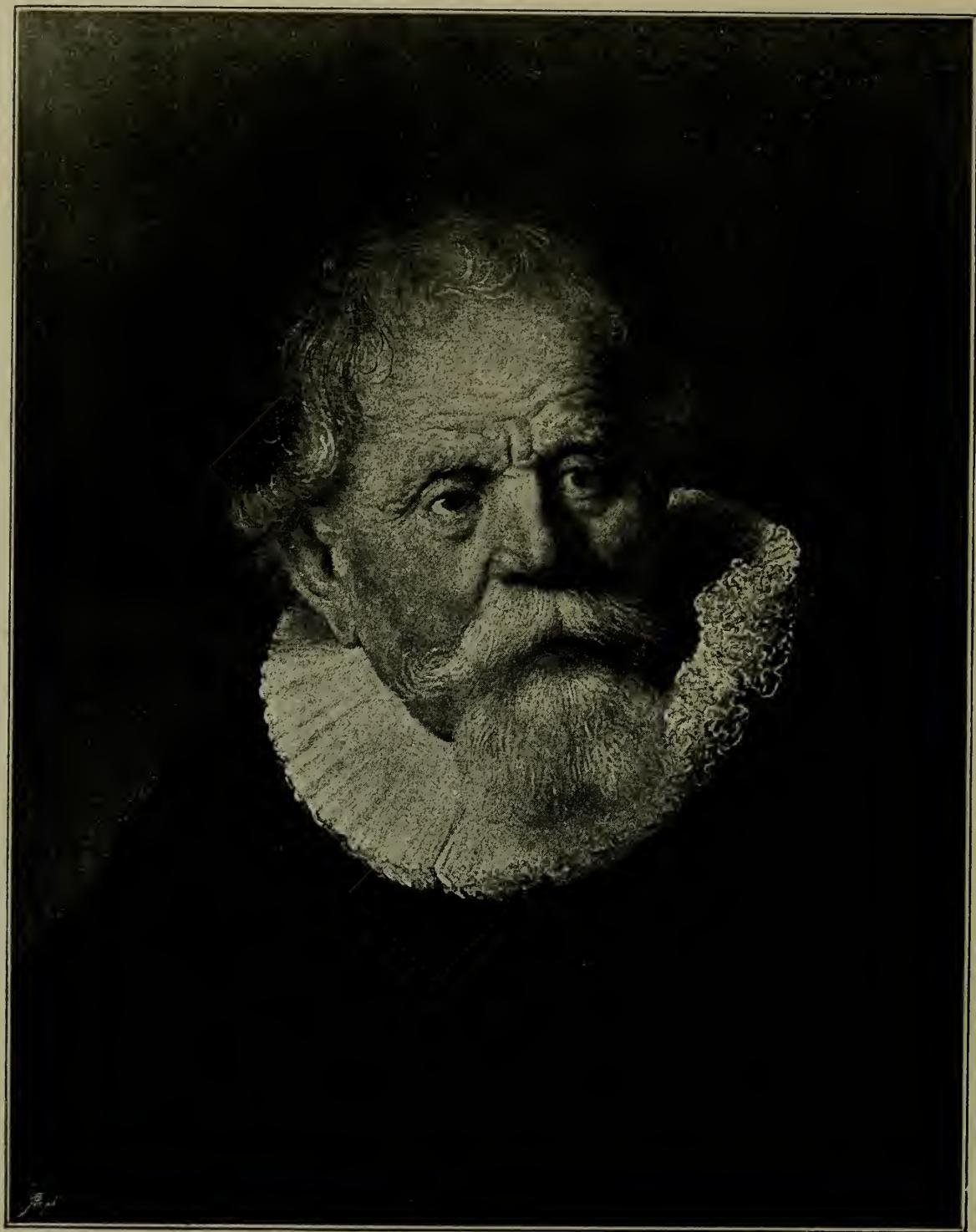


Fig. 36. HEAD OF THE MAN IN THE DOUBLE PORTRAIT "THE SHIP-BUILDER AND HIS WIFE", painted 1633,
in the collection of H. M. the Queen at Buckingham Palace.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

merely for practice or for the pleasure of himself and those about him. Thus he was not content even with the first impressions which he took of the plate with the portrait of Silvius; he worked at the plate afresh, as he often did in other cases; he sought to give life to the portrait by

deepening the shadows, but by so doing he destroyed to some extent the unity of effect. And so, while the etching in any case is rather rare, the impressions taken from the plate in its first state have a special value, not



Fig. 37. BURGOMASTER PANCRAS AND HIS WIFE. Painting at Buckingham Palace.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

only on account of their great rarity, but also because they exhibit the excellent portrait in greater beauty (Fig. 34).

The number of portraits painted in 1633 is very large. Rembrandt became the most popular portrait-painter in Amsterdam. Ladies and gentlemen of the best society applied to him, and he produced master-

pieces of the first order in painting their portraits. Among these, to name only some of the best known, are the half-length of the poet Jan Harmensz Krul in the Picture-Gallery at Cassel (Fig. 35) and the magnificent double portrait of a ship-builder and his wife in the collection of the Queen at Buckingham Palace. The latter is conceived as a genre picture; the husband is engaged in planning the design of a ship, and is interrupted at his work by his wife, who comes in with a letter (Fig. 36 reproduces the head of the man from this picture). A fine example of Rembrandt's ability in giving the form of a genre painting to a double portrait is the picture of Burgomaster Pancras and his wife, in the same collection of the Queen. There, too, the people seem to have been fond of making a display of their riches. The couple are represented getting ready for some festal occasion which requires a great show of finery; the burgomaster's wife sits in front of a mirror, wearing a rich mantle, and puts on her jewels; her husband, already in full gala dress, stands by her side and holds more jewels ready for her (Fig. 37).

Nothwithstanding the numerous commissions for portraits which kept the master employed in the year 1633 — about forty portraits can be counted which were painted by Rembrandt between 1632 and 1634 — he still found time to carry out small pictures of fancy subjects like the "Philosophers" at the Louvre and the exquisite picture, glowing with the red light of dawn, at Buckingham Palace, "Christ appearing to St. Mary Magdalene as a gardener". And, besides that, he did not tire of producing portraits of his own choosing, for practice and for his own pleasure, both in etching and in painting. He dressed up his Jewish models with high turbans and other fantastic articles of apparel and made patriarchs and high-priests of them, while, most frequently of all, he sat as a model to himself in various kinds of attire; it was just in these years that an extraordinarily large number of portraits of Rembrandt by himself were produced. We find among them curious experiments with unusual pieces of costume; an etching of 1634 which has become very rare, "Rembrandt with the sabre" (*au sabre flamboyant*), shows him in a dress somewhat like that of an elector, with a sword in his hand. He painted himself also in all kinds of disguises, now in a gold-embroidered velvet mantle and a hat and feathers, with the air of a nobleman (Fig. 53), now as a warrior in armour and helmet, with a stern look in his eyes. We must not forget, in looking at such portraits, that it was not the master's object to produce a likeness of his person, but always to solve some artistic problem in which he was interested, whether something which told of the inner man, some particular expression, or some picturesque effect of lighting or drapery, or all these things together. That is why in all these studies, though we may immediately recognise the master's features, we very seldom obtain the impression of having a speaking likeness before us. Yet Rembrandt repeatedly painted himself also in such a fashion, that we can be in no doubt about his express intention of producing a faithful likeness of himself as he was, for

his own friends and for posterity. To these portraits of himself in the stricter sense belong the splendid picture of 1633 in the Louvre (Fig. 38) and a very similar one, but in a different costume, in the same collection, separated only by a slight interval of time from the first (Fig. 49).



Fig. 38. PORTRAIT OF HIMSELF, painted in 1633. At the Louvre.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

In the year 1633 Rembrandt had, perhaps, a particular reason for looking attentively at his own person. A painting of this year in the Dresden Gallery shows us the bust of a young lady with a delicate, rosy complexion and curly, golden hair, who looks at us from under the shade

of a red velvet hat with merry eyes and a laugh on her lips. This is Saskia van Uylenburgh (or, as it was written in her native place, Uilenborg), the orphan daughter of the lawyer Rombertus Uylenburgh, who had resided at Leeuwarden. How and where Rembrandt made the acquaintance of this daughter of an old and highly respected Frisian family, we do not know. Was he commissioned to paint her portrait, and did the sunny smile which he immortalised in such a charming way, steal its way to his heart as he did so? Or was this smile of Saskia's given to one who was already the husband of her choice? Suffice it to say that she was betrothed



Fig. 39. THE CARD-PLAYER. Etching. (First state.)

to him. We see her standing with all the seriousness of an affianced bride in the splendid portrait, with its incomparable charm of colouring, in the Cassel Gallery, a picture which leaves a lasting impression on all who see it, and which Rembrandt finished with unusual care. Saskia appears here in the dress of a woman of fashion; she wears a red velvet hat with gold ornaments and a white ostrich-feather, a dress of dark-red velvet with sleeves of a light, golden-grey stuff with a small pattern in colours, a dull-blue collar embroidered in gold and colours; she has a fur cloak thrown lightly about her; there is a glitter of gold, pearls and gems in her hair, round her neck, on her bosom and on her arms; in her gloved right hand she holds a sprig of rosemary and she looks before her with

a thoughtful expression, showing to the spectator the pure, maidenly lines of her profile (Fig. 42). Saskia was not a beauty, but she was quite pretty and endowed with all the charm and gaiety of youth in its early



Fig. 40. FIRST PORTRAIT OF SASKIA VAN UYLENBURGH, AFTERWARDS REMBRANDT'S WIFE. In the Dresden Gallery.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

bloom. She was a relative of the preacher, Jan Silvius, who was one of Rembrandt's earliest patrons, and when Rembrandt and Saskia had their banns published at Amsterdam on the 10th June, 1634, Silvius appeared as the representative of the bride. We learn by the document relating

to this event, which is still extant, that Rembrandt's father was already dead at that time, for the consent of Rembrandt's mother only was obtained to the marriage-contract.¹⁾

Among Rembrandt's etchings of the year 1635 there is one which has a claim to special notice. For it was, perhaps, this that first gave occasion to an important task which occupied Rembrandt during a number of years. This was a Descent of Christ from the Cross, called "the large Descent from the Cross", to distinguish it from other etchings by Rembrandt of a similar subject. Three men have mounted the cross on ladders, and loosened the body from the wood; the uppermost of them is now leaning

over the cross-beam and holding the upper end of a linen shroud which they have been careful to lay under the body of the dead Saviour; the two other men standing on the ladders hold the naked body by the arms as it slips down heavily, losing its shape, to be received by two men standing below, who hold their hands reverently under the linen cloth. Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, the two Maries and a few disciples, partly standing, partly crouching on the ground, surround the foot of the cross. Their looks follow the motion of the body; the Mother alone keeps her face bent downwards. A precious carpet is held ready by the women to make a bed for their departed Lord. Joseph of Arimathea super-



Fig. 41. GIRL WITH A BASKET. Etching.

intends the whole action; he is marked out by his attire as a rich man, and as he stands there leaning on his stick, sedate and calm, he preserves in his bearing the dignity of the distinguished councillor in spite of all his grief. It is the depth of night, and the fortifications and cupolas of the city rise indistinctly in the distance out of the dim twilight-glow on the horizon; but supernatural rays of light are shed from the dark sky, which give light for the pious task and envelop the sacred body in a halo. "Here is a proof", says the French writer on art, M. Charles Blanc, "here is a proof that noble art depends not only on forms, but also on the feeling which animates them. The representation of a few Christians moved to tears over the dead body of their God could very well do without beauty, in

¹⁾ Rembrandt's father died on the 27th April 1630. C. D.



Fig. 42. PORTRAIT OF REMBRANDT'S BETROTHED, SASKIA VAN UYLENBURGH. In the Royal Picture-Gallery, Cassel.
(From a photograph by Franz Hanfstängl, Munich.)

the antique or pagan sense. It sufficed to breath soul into the picture, and that Rembrandt has done in throwing the light of his genius upon it. How can we fail to be interested in such a scene, when Heaven itself is interested in it!" (Fig. 43.)

We see the Descent from the Cross represented just in the same way, but in a still more impressive form, owing to the spell which colour casts

over it, in a painting which is now in the Alte Pinakothek at Munich (Fig. 44). This painting together with four others in the same Gallery forms a connected series which treats of the end of the Saviour's life on earth, from the erection of the Cross to the Ascension. They are deeply im-



Fig. 43. THE LARGE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS. Etching of 1634.

pressive creations. The external ugliness of the figures which we see in them is completely lost sight of in the beauty of soul which they display. Perhaps a person who takes pleasure merely in the superficial aspect of a work of art may discover much harshness and want of beauty in the com-

positions as a whole; but the mysterious poetry of the effect of light is here all the more penetrating in its force, because the victorious power

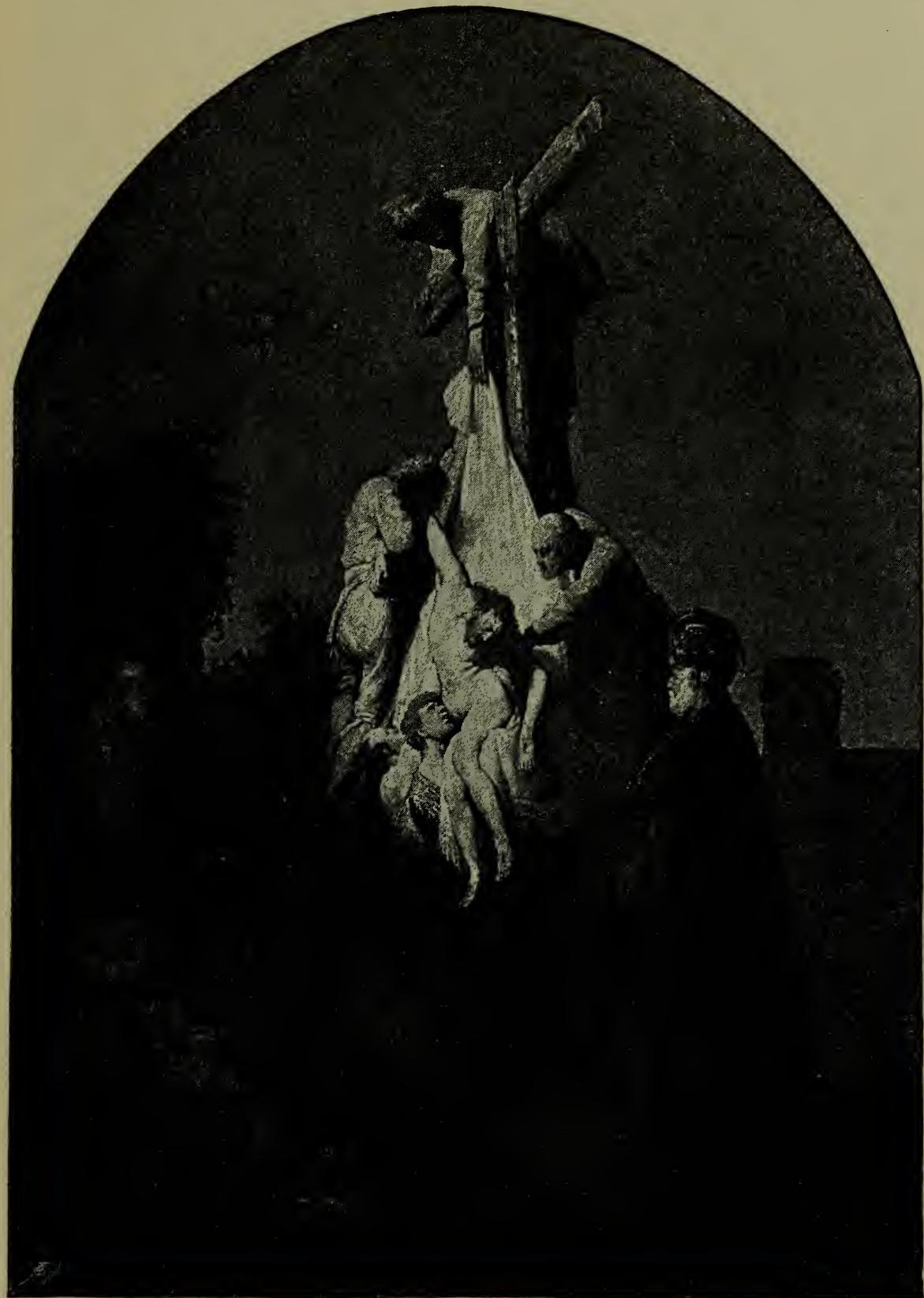


Fig. 44. THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS, painted for the Stadholder Frederick Henry,
now in the Pinakothek, Munich.
(From a photograph by Franz Hanfstängl, Munich.)

of light in contrast to the darkness which lies spread round about it is in such immediate correspondence with the subjects represented; and this

very poetry lays the beholder under a magic spell, while the harmony of colour, combined in a peculiar and undescribable scheme, penetrates his soul like the melodies of the ancient hymns of the church. Rembrandt painted these pictures to order for the ruler of his country, the Stadholder Frederick Henry, Prince of Orange. He finished the last of them in 1638, and he received for each the sum of 600 florins; on this affair, the delivery of the "Entombment" and "Resurrection", and the payment he received for them, three autograph letters of Rembrandt are preserved. To the five pictures of the Passion there belonged, further, in order to complete the history of the work of Redemption, a representation of the Nativity. All six pictures passed by inheritance to the Electoral Gallery at Düsseldorf, and thence with the remainder of the most precious treasures of that collection to Munich. The picture of the Nativity is almost more striking than the rest. Mary and Joseph are lodged in the stable in extreme poverty and humility; Joseph holds a lamp to show the child to the shepherds who enter reverentially, and the child itself, thus fully lighted, seems to be the actual source of the rays, the reflection of which beautifies the mean surroundings. In a similar, and yet again a different, manner Rembrandt represented the Nativity of Christ in an etching, perhaps at the same period at which he was carrying out the picture. Here it is, even more than in the picture, the "stilly night". Mary, wrapped in her mantle, rests on the straw, the new-born babe at her side; on the other side of the child Mary's husband, huddled together, is watching and reading; opposite to them lie the beasts housed in the stable. Then the shepherds enter, men, women and children—we see what pains they are taking to step softly—headed by a bearded man with a lantern, and in solemn silence hail in the child the Ransomer of the poor.

It need not be said that such an industrious and accomplished painter as Rembrandt, during the five years which he employed in completing the six pictures ordered by the Stadholder, which contain their vast subjects in a small compass, spent only a comparatively small fraction of his time on the task in question.

The year 1634 brought him, as has been mentioned already, commissions for portraits in abundance. Among the masterpieces of his portrait-painting in this year, some of which rank with the most excellent of all his works, a place of honour should be given to the bust of a lady of advanced years in a white cap and ruff, now in the National Gallery, London (Fig. 47).

Among the etchings also of the year 1634, there are several works of quite remarkable merit. There is first to be mentioned the large "Angel appearing to the Shepherds". The shepherds are taking their repose with their herds in a magnificent wooded mountain-landscape. A heavenly radiance breaks in upon the dark night from a thick mass of clouds which descend, so that the cattle start up in alarm from their slumbers and run away. The shepherds also flee, throw themselves down and gaze upwards in amazement, while their crooks fall from their hands. An angel in white



Fig. 45. THE ANNUNCIATION TO THE SHEPHERDS. Etching of 1634.

raiment, in a flood of brilliant light, the source of which is surrounded by jubilant hosts of little angels, has stepped forward to the edge of the cloud and, raising one hand to heaven while he stretches out the other to allay their fears, speaks to the terrified men the heavenly words, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy" (Fig. 45). An effective and expressive etching represents the Saviour's meeting with the woman of Samaria at the well of Jacob. Jesus sits in the light of the evening sun on the edge of the well, which is connected with the ruins of an extensive ancient building; we seem to hear how the gentle and serious words fall from the lips of the tired wayfarer, and the woman

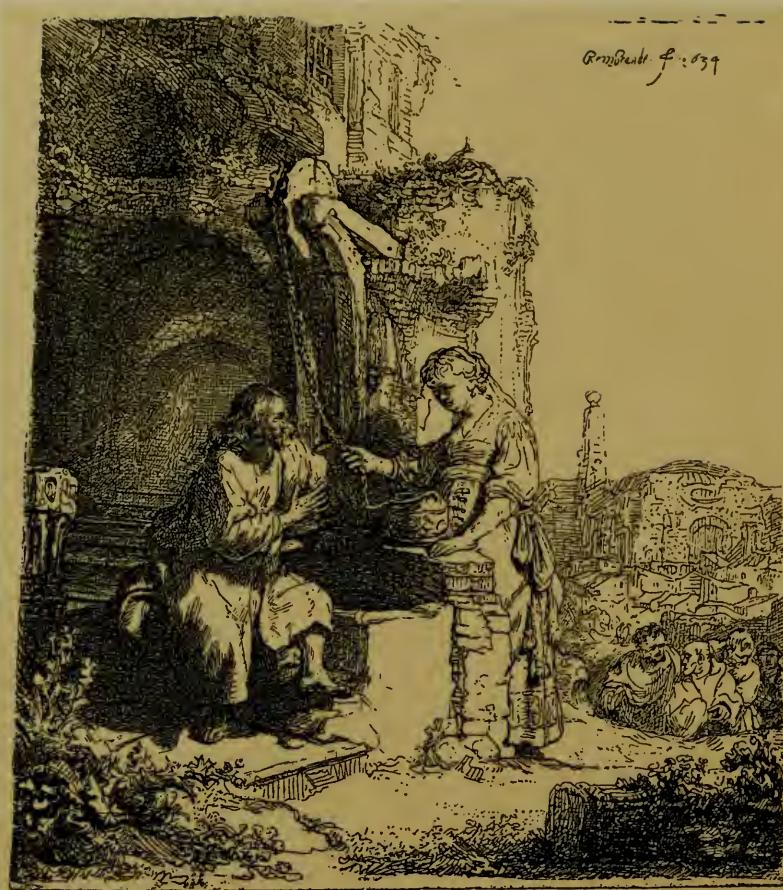


Fig. 46. CHRIST AND THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA (with the ruin).
Etching of 1634.

stands facing him, outwardly calm but troubled in her heart, so that she forgets to let down the pitcher which she has already fastened to the chain; in the distance rises the town of Sychar with its stately buildings and the disciples are mounting the slope of the hill, surprised to find their master talking to the woman (Fig. 46). A small print, again masterly in expression, represents the incident of the two disciples at Emmaus. "The day is far spent" and the evening sun, throwing strong shadows, shines into the room, which we must take to be open on one side, where Christ sits at a small table with the two disciples, who have laid aside their staves and scrips. The Saviour has just taken the bread in both hands, to break it; "then were their eyes opened"; one, who sits opposite to him, a man of rustic appearance with a high Jewish cap, gazes fixedly at him and shuts his hands together, while the other, a dignified old man, pauses in the act of carving the meat, with a look which seems as if it would penetrate into the inmost being of the stranger, and ask whether he be indeed the Crucified; but round the latter's head there is a circle of flaming rays, which far exceeds in significance the nimbus which is usual in sacred art; even if the incident were unfamiliar to us, we could not be in doubt that here among mortals sits a more than earthly being, soon to vanish from their sight (Fig. 48).

Rembrandt once attempted to depict this very disappearance in a clever drawing, now in the Cabinet of Prints at Dresden: at the moment when the disciples have recognised Christ, he has vanished from their sight, and their eyes are fixed on the vacant chair, over which a mysterious light



Fig. 47. PORTRAIT OF AN OLD LADY, painted 1634, in the National Gallery, London.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

seems still to hover. In contrast to such creations of poetical imagination stand prints which are transcripts from life of the most precise realism, such as the woman reading, who is so completely absorbed in her book during the Sabbath rest (Fig. 50). We have a similar masterpiece of



Fig. 48. CHRIST AND THE DISCIPLES AT EMMAUS. Etching of 1634.

subtle observation in the bust of a card-player, which is scratched on the copper-plate quite hastily, evidently without the knowledge of the person represented (Fig. 39). Then, too, the scarce little print with the half-length sketch of a girl returning from market (Fig. 41) is a pretty example of the instantaneous pictures in which Rembrandt immortalised figures that came by chance within the circle of his vision.

We can understand how the artist found a welcome subject for study in his young wife. A charming silver-point drawing, which belongs to the Cabinet of Prints at Berlin, shows us Saskia on the third day after her wedding, with her head gently propped on her hand, looking out in cheerful contentment under her wide-brimmed straw hat with a look which is not meant for unknown admirers of the drawing but is devoted to the draughtsman himself (Fig. 51). It is curious that in this drawing the inscription gives the month, indeed, correctly, but both the day and the year are wrong. Can Rembrandt in the joy of his heart have gone altogether wrong in the calculation of time? That familiarity with numbers was not one of Rembrandt's strong points is proved, indeed, by his correspondence with the secretary of the Prince of Orange. As a matter of fact, Rem-

brandt's marriage with Saskia, as we are informed by the marriage-register of the parish of Bildt in Friesland, took place on the 22nd June, 1634. A later drawing thrown off quite rapidly, but in a very telling style, in pen



Fig. 49. PORTRAIT OF HIMSELF, painted 1634. In the Louvre.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

and wash, shows us the young wife at full length, with her housewife's apron on, sitting by the window, near which the Bible is propped up with its leaves open. Rembrandt was fond of dressing up his wife, as he did himself, with all sort of bits of costume from his studio wardrobe. He

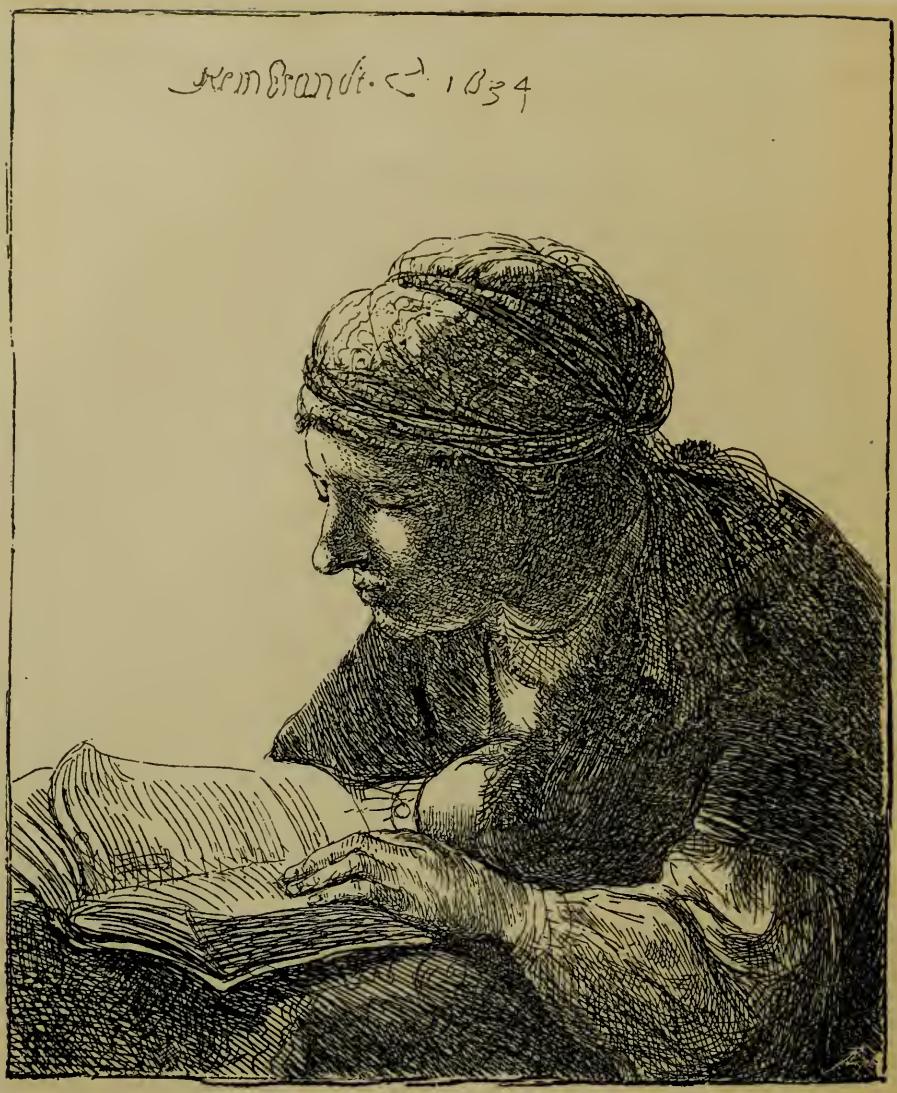


Fig. 50. THE WOMAN READING. Etching of 1634.

etched her portrait in the most diverse lights and aspects; particularly charming is her appearance in the rare print which shows her in direct full-face, once more resting her brow and cheek on her hand, with a light veil over her hair, which hangs down loose at the sides (Fig. 54).

Rembrandt was anxious to preserve for posterity documentary proof, so to speak, of his married happiness in a larger picture. So he produced the celebrated double portrait which belongs to the Dresden Gallery. Rembrandt sits at a richly spread table in the costume of a cavalier, his rapier at his side, a velvet cap with wavy ostrich-feathers on his long, curly hair; in his right hand he raises a glass of foaming wine, while he places his left hand round the waist of his wife, whom he dandles on his knee. Rembrandt laughs with unrestrained joyousness for all the world to see; Saskia looks round with a sharp turn of the neck and gazes at the spectator with a pleased but modest and becoming expression. An indescribable luxuriance and charm of colour enriches the picture and heightens the artist's unreserved expression of his supreme joy in life (Fig. 55). The



Fig. 51. REMBRANDT'S WIFE, SASKIA VAN UYLENBURGH. Silver-point drawing in the Berlin Print-Cabinet.
"Dit is naer mijn huijsvrou geconterfeit do mij 21 jaer oud was den derden dach als wij getrouwden waren
de 8 junijus 1633."

whole picture breathes of prosperity; Saskia wears valuable jewellery, which, indeed, represents only a small part of the treasures which Rembrandt lavished on his beloved wife; we are informed that in 1638 some of his relations, on the occasion of a dispute about the division of some property, a trivial affair enough in itself, accused him openly of squandering all his patrimony on ornament and finery, and that he brought an action for slander against them on that account, in which he was not successful. We cannot but be grateful to the master for letting us see his face, for



Fig. 52. SASKIA SITTING AT THE WINDOW. Pen- and -wash drawing.

once, in the sunshine of the brightest gaiety, for the portraits which he painted of himself in early life—we are not speaking now of those which do not show his natural expression, but one assumed for the purpose of the picture—display, as a rule, a profound seriousness. Thus the magnificent portrait of himself in the National Gallery, London, one of the very finest of his portraits, produced about the same time as the Dresden picture, shows us features full of earnest thought—the features of an artist who is a keen and clear observer, but who does even more by reflection and brain-work (Fig. 56). To the year 1635, which we may regard for certain as that in which the double portrait at Dresden was produced, belongs a picture of a mythological subject, which is also in

the Dresden Gallery, "The Rape of Ganymede". The favourite of the father of gods is supposed to be quite a young boy, who was in the act of eating cherries when the eagle swooped down to carry him off to the



Fig. 53. PORTRAIT OF HIMSELF, in an embroidered velvet cloak and a cap and feathers, painted 1635.
In the Liechtenstein Gallery, Vienna.
(From a photograph by Franz Hanfstängl, Munich.)

sky; he utters piteous cries and expresses his terror in a way which is not to be particularised. In this case all the merits of the painting do not help us to get over the utter want of taste and the complete absence



Fig. 54. STUDY OF A WOMAN'S HEAD. (Saskia.) Etching of 1635.

of beauty of form. This picture is the strongest proof that Rembrandt completely lacked all sense and understanding of what justifies the choice of a mythological subject. But even in a picture of a biblical subject, which he carried out at the same time, he was not entirely successful. Samson uttering to his father-in-law, who withholds from him his wife, the menacing words, "Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure", is the subject of the painting in the Berlin Museum. It was long believed that it represented an incident in the life of the Duke Adolphus of Gueldres; but the giant in oriental dress with the abundant head of long, dark hair is characterised with sufficient clearness

as Samson (Fig. 59). In spite of its not being immediately intelligible, and in spite of a composition which may be called positively awkward, the picture is otherwise very impressive owing to its powerful effect of colouring.



Fig. 55. REMBRANDT AND HIS WIFE. In the Royal Picture-Gallery, Dresden.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

Among the etchings of 1635 there is one famous print, "Christ purifying the Temple". It is a subject treated with great force and full of life and movement. Christ, whose powerful form looks like a reminiscence of one of Dürer's figures, bursts in passionate indignation upon the buyers and sellers who carry on their traffic in the aisles of the Temple, regardless

of a solemn service which is going on in the Sanctuary on a higher level; it was a curious, but effective, idea, to make the nimbus surround, not the Saviour's head, but his clenched hand which holds the scourge. The tables of the money-changers are upset; the money rolls on the ground; men, too, fall down in their hurried flight, whilst others are still endeavouring in haste to secure their wares; men and animals are running away—for Rembrandt has imagined cattle-dealers, and not merely sellers of doves, to form part of the traffickers who defile the sanctuary—while an ugly cur yelps round the skirts of Christ's garment without venturing to approach him. The longer we look at the print, the more astonishing are the details which we find in it, especially in the faces and gestures of the various Jewish dealers disturbed in their occupations (Fig. 57).

Among other biblical subjects we should, perhaps, also assign to this date the small print of the Crucifixion, which is so extremely simple and unpretending in its composition and yet produces a most impressive effect by the speaking contrast of the mother, who has sunk swooning to the ground, and the son stretched out helpless on the Cross (Fig. 58). Besides these creations of deep and serious thought, there is no lack of slighter pictures from life; what an abundance of spirit and humour there is in the delightful picture of street-life, the "Pancake-woman" (Fig. 60). There are some splendid portrait-etchings of the year 1635. We have a bust of an old gentleman of lively temperament, with bright, clever eyes under his wrinkled brow, with carefully brushed moustache and a black silk skull-cap on his bald head, his shoulders covered by a fur cape on which there glitters the golden chain of an order. This is said to be Jacob Cats, poet and statesman, the worthy tutor of the Prince of Orange, and still a popular author in Holland, where he is known as "Father Cats" (Fig. 61). Worthy to rank with this masterpiece of spirit and life is the portrait of Jan Uytenbogaert, preacher of the sect of Arminian Remonstrants; a portrait picturesquely posed and so carefully carried out that it has all the effect of a picture. This clergyman, who had now reached the age of seventy-eight, had been from 1599 to 1614 first chaplain of the forces, then court-preacher to Maurice, Prince of Orange, but had then fallen into disgrace on account of his friendship with Barneveldt and Grotius, and had taken refuge in France; since the accession of Prince Frederick Henry (1625) he was once more tolerated in his native country and was now a resident at the Hague. With attractive features from which the traces of sorrow and anxiety have not been able to efface an expression of paternal benevolence, he looks up from his perusal of the theological writings which cover his table, and fixes his tired eyes on the spectator (Fig. 62). Under the etching are Latin verses composed by Hugo Grotius, to the following intent:

By godly folk and warlike hosts admired,
He moved the court its vices to deplore;
Tossed to and fro by fate, by years untired,
The Hague calls Uytenbogaert hers once more.

We see from such portraits that Rembrandt associated with the best and most cultivated men of his nation. With the statesman, who was jurist and poet as well, and with the ecclesiastic of earnest convictions,



Fig. 56. PORTRAIT OF REMBRANDT BY HIMSELF, painted about 1635, in the National Gallery, London.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

we may name the famous physician and professor at the University of Leyden, Jan Antonsz (or, in the form which he adopted as a man of learning, Johannes Antonides) van der Linden, of whom — perhaps on the



Fig. 57. THE PURIFICATION OF THE TEMPLE. Etching of 1635. (First state.)



Fig. 58. THE CRUCIFIXION. Etching.

occasion of a visit to his native town, for the date is not mentioned — Rembrandt etched a portrait, in which both pose and expression are delightful (Fig. 63). In spite of the great dexterity which Rembrandt had now attained, he never paused in making studies for practice. As Dürer had not disdained to make the wing of a bird or the coat of a hare the object of most conscientious study, so Rembrandt painted with minute accuracy combinations of lifeless objects, birds of various plumage and the like, in order to let himself be instructed by nature in the secret of a harmonious scheme of colour. But before

all else the human countenance continued to be the object of his unintermitting attention. Besides etchings from models of various kinds (Fig. 64 and 65), numerous drawings, carried out with more or less care, but for the most part instantaneous sketches quite lightly thrown off, bear witness



Fig. 59. SAMSON MENACING HIS FATHER-IN-LAW. Painting of 1635, in the Berlin Museum.
(From a photograph by Franz Hanfstängl, Munich.)

to his zeal (Fig. 66, 67 and 68). We also occasionally meet with a caricature among the drawings, such as the master, perhaps, would draw as he was engaged in merry conversation with his friends, in order to bring some person of whom they were just talking, before the eyes of all in recognisable

shape (Fig. 69). Jews continue to occur most frequently among Rembrandt's studies of heads, whether they are drawn with the pen, the pencil or the etching-point. By degrees there came to be included among the master's Jewish acquaintances people whose relations with him were not those of the hired model or the secondhand dealer; they began to give him commissions.

In an etching of 1636 we are presented with the portrait of a Jew of great note, Menasseh Ben Israel (Fig. 70). He scarcely looks Jewish at



Fig. 60. THE PANCAKE-WOMAN. Etching of 1635.

first sight, especially as the cut of his beard and the style of his dress have none of the peculiarities which distinguished the Jews at that time, but agree with the general fashion. Behind his insignificant-looking features with the heavy eyelids, it takes some looking to detect a quick intelligence and the many-sided talent and trained mind of a great scholar. Born at Lisbon in 1604, Menasseh Ben Israel came as a child with his father to Amsterdam, where so many Portuguese Jews at that time took refuge and enjoyed religious liberty; the learning which he acquired as a lad was so great that at the age of eighteen he was appointed chief rabbi of one

of the three synagogues at Amsterdam. But his greatest title to fame was a quite extraordinary knowledge of languages; besides this he was a doctor of medicine; he has left numerous writings, chiefly on theological topics.

We also read the date 1636 on several remarkable etchings of biblical subjects. One small print represents the death of St. Stephen. Neither the form of the young witness to the faith nor the lines of the composition have in themselves much beauty. But this rough crowd showing its delight



Fig. 61. JACOB CATS (?), Jurist, Poet and Statesman (afterwards Pensioner of the Council in Holland and Keeper of the Great Seal). Etching of 1635.

in stoning the innocent and defenceless man, makes a picture which will for all time hold true of a mob with its worst passions excited. We see even in the drawing, how deeply Rembrandt has entered into his subject; we might almost say that these harsh and hasty lines, falling abruptly one on the other and crossing, are instinct with passion and at the same time with indignation at the violent act (Fig. 71). How completely different is the treatment in the wonderful etching which has for its subject the Return of the Prodigal Son! How clearly we see here that the artist's

hand has been guided by devout and deeply felt emotion! This theme, so often treated, giving such an opportunity as it does to the artist, has never been handled in such an affecting and impressive way as here. The son is an abject creature, only covered with the barest rags, pressing to his father's breast a face disfigured by the traces of crime and misery, but now beautified from within by the expression of penitence and of



Fig. 62. JAN UYTENBOGAERT, Preacher of the Sect of Arminian Remonstrants.
Etching of 1635.

joy found once more in forgiveness. The father himself, shocked at the appearance which his son presents, but giving way to no other feeling but joy, forgiving and forgetting all now that the lost is found, has hastened in long strides to the spot, and bends over him full of affection. As a masterly portrayal of soul, the design has hardly an equal. The emotions of the subordinate figures appeal to us no less strongly. The mother, who hastily thrusts open the shutter, has not yet mastered the torrent of feeling which overcomes her; the servant, who brings up shoes and fair raiment for the new-comer, does not know where to look or what to say, and behind

him appears the brother, incapable of concealing in his countenance the resentment which he feels at the kind reception of the Prodigal. Through the arch of the gateway to the court we look into the open country, where a hill with a few buildings bounds the view; there are only a few strokes to suggest the landscape, but they suffice to call up in our minds the idea that the penitent has returned from long wanderings over hill and dale (Fig. 72).

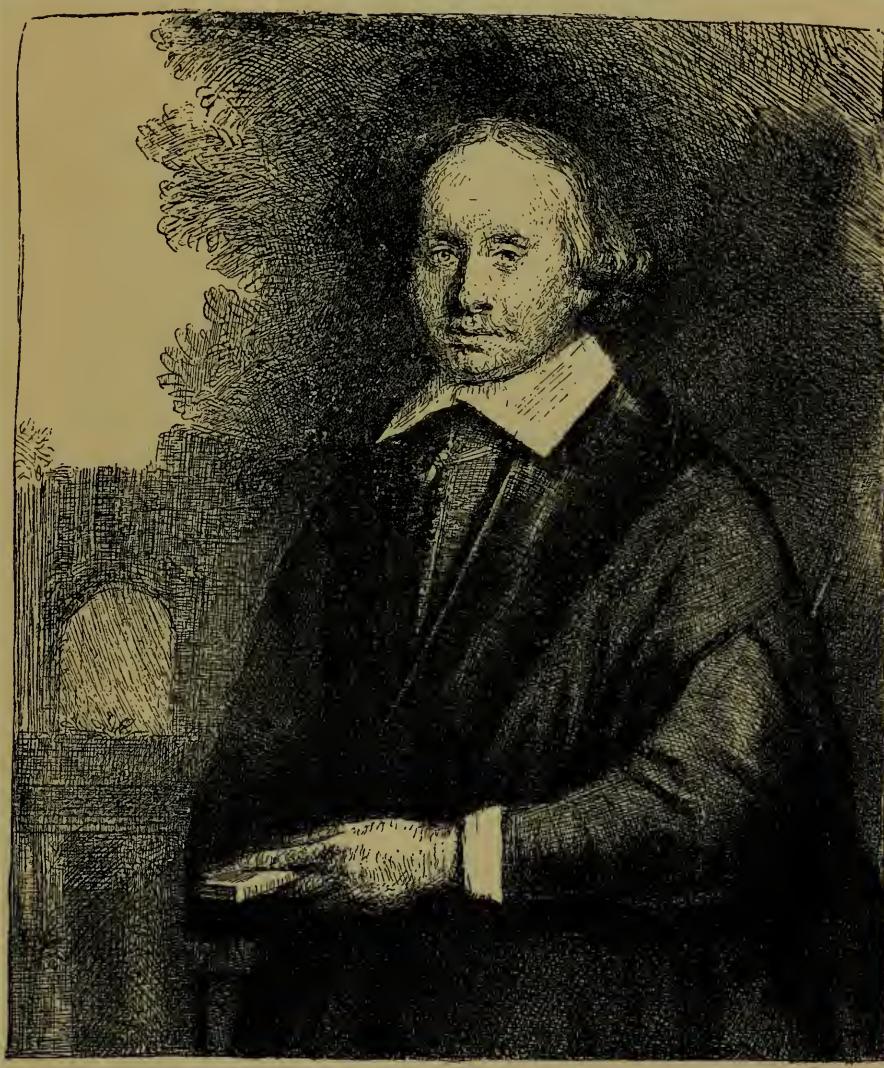


Fig. 63. JOHANNES ANTONIDES VAN DER LINDEN,
Famous physician and professor at the University of Leyden. Etching.

We have evidence of the industry with which the master studied in a print with six studies of heads, which are so crowded together, in his determination to use up all the space afforded by the plate which lay ready to his hand, that one competes with another for a place upon it. The middle one of these heads is the most highly finished, and here we recognise without difficulty the features of Saskia, very agreeably presented, with loose, curly hair about her head (Fig. 73). On another print of the same year, 1636, we find Saskia in the company of her husband. This etching, which has always been highly prized, presents, in a measure, a



Fig. 64. MAN WITH LONG HAIR. Etching.

contrast to the Dresden picture. Whereas in the latter delight in enjoyment is the subject, in the former we see loving companionship which is no interruption to serious work. It is evening, for we can only suppose the light to proceed from a lamp hanging over the table, but too high to be seen in the picture. Saskia has sat down to rest after the day's work; but the indefatigable Rembrandt, in exchanging the studio for the living-room, merely varies the method of his industry; shading his eyes from the lamplight by a hat with a wide brim, he has taken a sheet of paper or a copper plate, to follow up the artistic inspirations which the moment suggests (Fig. 75).

Two large pictures bear the date 1636. One of these is a "Danaë", or, according to another title recently proposed for it, "The Bride of Tobias". The name here is of no consequence; we have simply a young woman undraped, reclining on a soft couch. The picture is in the Hermitage at St. Petersburg, which possesses altogether a greater number of pictures by Rembrandt than are united in any other collection. "As a work of nature, frightful; incomparable as a work of art"—that is how one writer characterises it, whereas others name it with the Venuses of Titian, and



Fig. 65. THE OLD MAN ASLEEP, WITH A LARGE CAP. Etching.

reckon it simply as one of the choicest masterpieces of this collection, which is as rich in works of art of the first class, as it is, unluckily, remote. The other large picture of this year, which is in the collection of Count Schönborn at Vienna (there is a good old copy in the Cassel Gallery), is also difficult for even the most enthusiastic devotee of Rembrandt to admire. It represents Samson being overpowered by the Philistines. The defenceless hero, thrown to the ground, lets out with hands and feet all about him, whilst his foes, in iron mail, fall upon him and one gouges out his eye with the steel, while Delilah runs away in triumph with the severed locks in her hand. The representation of the scene is as gruesome as it is ugly, and the worst thing about it is, that the gruesome ugliness of it verges on the ludicrous.

He painted, probably, in the same year, the splendid figure of the "Civic Standard-bearer", as he is called, clad entirely in brown, who stands in a proud posture, pressing his right hand on his lip, and holding in his left hand a standard which droops over his shoulder, from the whiteish, silky tone of which the dark head stands out wonderfully; in the face we may, perhaps, recognise the features of the painter under a mask of soldier-like roughness (Fig. 74). The picture is in the possession of Baroness James de Rothschild at Paris (an old copy in the Cassel Gallery). Among portraits of persons unknown, the bust, treated with unsurpassable distinction, of a young man evidently of the highest rank, with a wide lace collar, in



Fig. 66. OLD WOMAN. Drawing in the Albertina, Vienna.

(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

An etching shows us Abraham repudiating Hagar. Clad in rich oriental costume, the patriarch stands on the threshold of his house; he has already set foot on the lowest of the steps at the entrance, in order to turn back into the house. He has just uttered his last word to Hagar, who departs, weeping bitterly, laden with a few goods and chattels, while the little Ishmael follows her, with a pouch at his side and a little bundle in his hand. Abraham's gesture seems to say, We have done with one another, your weeping touches me no longer. But Sarah looks out from the window, which is framed in leaves, and an unlovely smile flits across her aged features; it is an exultant smile, and it is not meant for the cast-off concubine, but for her husband. We see near her in the shadow of the house-door the chubby face of her little son, a thorough Hebrew (Fig. 80). A delightful pen-drawing in the Albertina is so like this etching as regards the costume and the relation of the figures to the landscape that it must, surely, have been done at the same period; it represents Judah giving his ring and staff as a pledge to Tamar, who sits by the wayside in a green, sunny spot (Fig. 81). The Old Testament, once more, has furnished the subject of a splendid painting of 1637, in the Louvre. The Angel Raphael leaving the family of Tobit is the subject of the magnificent and impressive picture. The angel has just made himself known, and Tobias and his father who had just been speaking to him as to a good friend, while he stood

the National Gallery, London, may be placed about this time (Fig. 77).

The year 1637 brings us again a splendid portrait of the master by himself, now in the Louvre (Fig. 78). An etching of this year shows us the remarkably eloquent portrait of an unknown man, a young and seemingly delicate scholar, who sits by his books, with his neck carefully protected from the cold, whilst the paleness of his complexion is apparent in his thoughtful face (Fig. 76). Another print combines three studies of female heads, charming in execution, from models of very different kinds (Fig. 79).

This year is further remarkable for several excellent compositions of biblical character.

Hagar. Clad in rich oriental

before the door of the house, have fallen on their knees, whilst a cloud descends to receive the messenger of heaven as his pinions bear him from their sight. The young Tobias, from whose gaze the angel is already passing into the shadow of the cloud, recognises with infinite amazement the supernatural character of his companion. The aged father, however, more readily comprehends the miracle of God; he has thrown himself in deep humility to the ground with his hands folded. He is strongly lit up by the heavenly radiance, as is the young woman who appears with the mother at the house-door under the foliage of the vine, and who folds her hands and prays while her countenance still reflects extreme astonishment; the mother, quite overpowered and dazzled by the apparition, turns away, and the crutch falls from her trembling hands (Fig. 82).

The story of Tobias was a favourite subject with Rembrandt. The collection of drawings in the Albertina contains a whole series of pen-drawings by Rembrandt of different periods which treat of this story. Here we have a glimpse of the poor, but comfortable, home of Tobias' parents. The mother is spinning, the blind father sits in the chimney-corner and speaks, in his anxiety about his son, to the messenger who is to be the latter's escort; the angel—recognisable as such to the spectator by his radiant form and by his wings—stands leaning on his staff, confronting the old man, and seems to give an attentive hearing to his words; the young Tobias stands by the fire-place, girt for the journey, and his little dog springs up at him in joyful impatience (Fig. 83). Then we see Tobias, carrying his bundle on a stick over his back, travelling through a wooded landscape by the angel's side, and listening to his conversation; the little dog, running along with them, is not forgotten (Fig. 84).

Once more, a specially charming and delicate drawing transports us to the banks of the Tigris, which rise gradually through meadows and bushes to heights which lie more remote. Tobias has drawn back his feet out of the water in childish terror on seeing the fish, and presses



Fig. 67. BUST OF AN OLD MAN. Drawing in the Albertina, Vienna.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co.,
Dornach and Paris.)

for protection up to the angel, who with stately and quiet bearing bids him grasp the fish (Fig. 85). Still finer is the sketch, washed to produce more of the effect of a painting, which shows Tobias cutting open the wriggling fish under the supervision of the angel, and taking out the gall which is to effect the cure. Nothing more poetical can be imagined than this sunny landscape by the banks of the river; we feel the heat of the day, which urges the little dog to quench its thirst with eager draughts, and we seem to breathe the fresh air off the water in the shade of the luxuriant trees (Fig. 86).

Another picture of the year 1637, "Susanna Bathing", in the Gallery at the Hague, makes the biblical subject merely a pretext for representing undraped feminine beauty—beauty, that is to say, as Rembrandt understood it, in which the charm is derived from colour, not from form. The subordinate figures of the two elders are only suggested by the head of one of them, which is visible among the bushes. Susanna is represented standing, in the act of stepping down into the water; she is seen from the side; as she looks round carefully, as if to make quite sure once more that she is alone, her face is turned towards the spectator. The unsurpassable fidelity to nature, with which the youthful form is represented, would not be sufficient reason for lavishing on the picture the high praise for beauty which it deserves; but there is the truest poetry in the manner in

which the delicate, fair skin shines out against the rich gloom of the bushes which form the background.

A third picture of the same year, now in the Hermitage at St. Petersburg, has drawn its material from the New Testament. It treats of the parable of the labourers in the vineyard. In the last rays of the evening sun the lord of the vineyard sits and listens to one of the labourers, who murmurs and says: "These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us." The power of expression by which



Fig. 68. OLD MAN READING. Drawing in the Albertina, Vienna.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co.,
Dornach and Paris.)

Rembrandt managed to give a visible shape even to matters which one might have thought it impossible to represent, endowed him with a unique gift for interpreting the parables of the gospel, and finding possibilities of pictorial treatment in matters which might have seemed to anyone else incapable of yielding them. Thus he has treated the parable of the unmerciful servant, from the eighteenth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, in two drawings which are now far apart, one being in the collection left by the late Duc d'Aumale at Chantilly, the other in the Albertina at Vienna. In one of these drawings we see the servant fallen on his knees in humble entreaty, in the attitude almost of worship, before his master, who sits over his books engaged in calculation, and we almost seem to hear the master's voice as with a slight turn of the head and a gentle motion of the hand he releases the suppliant from his debt. The second drawing (Fig. 87) shows us the same two figures; again the servant kneels on the floor, but now he can no longer expect forgiveness; for his lord has risen from his seat in anger, and the same hand which formerly granted forgiveness is now raised to declare a merciless sentence on the unmerciful servant, who cowers under the weight of the reproof.

The date at which the drawings were produced can, for the most part, be only approximately assumed, since in the majority of them the lines are so lightly and rapidly thrown off that they afford no sufficient indications of date; while Rembrandt has seldom marked the year on these sketches. He thought it worth while, however, to do so when he had an opportunity, in 1637, of drawing an elephant from life. In the towns of Holland, which at that time had the monopoly of trade across the ocean, and especially at Amsterdam, animals from foreign parts were exhibited perhaps more frequently than anywhere else, and Rembrandt, who loved study for its own sake, visited such exhibitions sketch-book in hand. His drawing of the elephant is quite masterly; he has not only given its general appearance, but has also rendered the peculiar character of the hide with matchless truth (Fig. 89). More hasty, but no less true, is a drawing of a lion which Rembrandt took one day from life (Fig. 88).



Fig. 69. OLD MAN. Drawing in the Albertina, Vienna.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co.,
Dornach and Paris.)

The charming drawing with the meeting of Eleazar and Rebecca at the well proves that he had studied the camel also from nature, and this is a beast in dealing with which painters of Old Testament subjects have often been far from successful. This delightful drawing, which, with the studies already mentioned, belongs to the Albertina, the richest of all collections in drawings by Rembrandt, is carefully worked out in certain parts, such as the figure of the man sitting tired out, whereas in others, for instance the animals which crowd round the drinking-place under the shady trees, it is only lightly sketched, and as the drawing is very delicate it does not reveal to us its whole beauty at first sight; but when we have well looked into it, it has the charm of a delicious idyll (Fig. 90).

Domestic animals were studied by Rembrandt more frequently with all the diligence which was peculiar to him, and he occasionally carried out such studies on the copper-plate instead of his sketch-book. An example of this is the sleeping dog (Fig. 91), which is reproduced with photographic accuracy, as we should say nowadays.

Among the biblical narratives which had a special attraction for Rembrandt, in addition to the story of Tobias, were those of Samson and of Joseph in Egypt. He was occupied with both of these in 1638. He followed up the two previous life-size paintings of the story of Samson with a picture of many figures, the subject of which was the hero's marriage-feast. The picture belongs to the Dresden Gallery and is marvellous for the charm of its colouring, which ranges from the most delicate, lustrous tones, like mother-of-pearl, to depths of ardent gold and purple. The colouring itself at once conveys an impression of festal state and splendour, in which we forget the curious manner in which the persons are represented. The daughter of the Timnite, arrayed in the richest bridal attire, is in full light in the centre of the picture; the proud tranquillity in which she sits under the splendid canopy forewarns us of the cold-blooded manner in which she will betray the secret of Samson's riddle to her townsfolk and then allow her father to give her away to another husband. Samson is placed at her left hand on a wide couch covered with a cushion at the head of the table; he has twisted round his wild and powerful form with a clumsy movement, and speaks with mouth and hands at once as he proposes to the Philistines the riddle which merely serves him as a pretext for driving a bargain; among the bystanders who listen to him every head is masterly in expression. Farther down along the richly laden table is the gay row of wedding-guests, abandoned to merriment without restraint, "for so used the young men to do", that is to say, in the Holland of Rembrandt's time, where feasts of similar license were the order of the day. There is a spirit of intoxication about the picture, in the figures and in the colour, and the cold appearance of the bride makes all the sharper contrast in consequence (Fig. 92).

To the story of Joseph in Egypt belongs one of the most famous of Rembrandt's etchings, "Joseph relating his dreams". The directly eloquent



Fig. 70. MENASSEH BEN ISRAEL, a Portuguese Jew, a famous linguist and physician, and Chief Rabbi at Amsterdam. Etching of 1636.

expression of the different persons; the profound emotion of Joseph, who is careful in his narrative not to commit the least inaccuracy about the marvel which he has dreamt; the meditative seriousness of the aged Jacob, sitting in his arm-chair, and of Leah, weary and old, who rests on a couch; all the degrees of displeasure in the brothers, who listen in part with the attentiveness of envy, and in part whisper mockingly one to another, while little Benjamin is the only one among them who listens to the narrator in childish curiosity, without guile or malice, looking up from the book which he is reading; and, last but not least, the charming and picturesque effect of the etching—all these are so many perfect justifications of the time-honoured reputation of this print, which stood so high even in Rembrandt's life-time that, according to a contemporary account, it argued a lack of culture, in the circles which cared for art, not to possess at least two impressions of the etching, a "little Joseph with the white face" and a "little Joseph with the black face". This means that in the impressions which Rembrandt took from the plate in its first state the face of one of Joseph's brethren, who stands behind him with a turban on his head and a velvet mantle on his shoulders, is in full light. When a number of proofs had

been printed, Rembrandt altered the plate by drawing a deep shadow over this face, part of the turban and the inner garment which is visible at the breast, and by more or less lowering the tone of the two neighbouring faces to correspond with it, as well as the adjacent parts of the background, curtain and door (Fig. 93). By this treatment the "black face" has decidedly lost some of its expression as compared with the white, but the alteration tells essentially in favour of the principal figure by throwing it more into relief. Besides, these subsequent re-workings of the copper-plate were not



Fig. 71. THE STONING OF ST STEPHEN. Etching of 1636.

the only means known to Rembrandt of producing such transformations in an etching that the impressions of different kinds were valued, and are valued still by collectors as if they were different works. Even the impressions taken from one and the same state of a plate frequently differ one from another in the case of etchings where the effect is important. For Rembrandt printed his etchings with his own hand, and he attained novel qualities of artistic charm and variety of effect by strengthening the tone in one place and reducing it in another. If a rumour got about that he possessed secrets in the art of engraving which were known to none besides, the secret, apart from his genius, consisted merely in the fact that he printed his own plates and applied his artistic skill and taste to the

printing as well as to the etching of them. — There are only a few portraits which are dated 1638. We may suppose that the execution of the series of pictures illustrating the history of the Redemption, commanded by the Prince of Orange, was now occupying his time pretty fully.

Of the few portraits which he did manage to carry out in intervals of leisure, one, probably, is the portrait of his mother in the Hermitage at St. Petersburg. Rembrandt had painted his aged mother several times



Fig. 72. THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON. Etching of 1636.

during the last few years before her death, which occurred in September 1640. It is wonderful how he pictured the serenity and peace of soul of a calm old age which trusts in Providence, in painting the attitude and features of this venerable dame. One of the latest of her portraits, painted in 1639, is an excellent picture which belongs to the Imperial collection at Vienna, and shows the old lady in a rich costume, according to her son's taste, resting both hands upon a staff.

One of the chief of the remaining pictures of the year 1639 is the life-sized and full-length portrait of a distinguished-looking man dressed in satin, in the Cassel Gallery.

We learn from the last of the letters addressed by Rembrandt on the



Fig. 73. SIX STUDIES OF HEADS, with Rembrandt's wife in the middle. Etching of 1636.

subject of the pictures which he was painting for the Prince of Orange to the latter's secretary Constantyn Huygens, that early in 1639 he made a present of a picture to this gentleman in recognition of the good will and consideration which he had shown him. Rembrandt does not mention the subject of the picture; but he begs the recipient of the gift to hang it in a very bright light and in such a way that it may be seen at a good distance.

In delivering these very pictures commanded by the Stadholder, Rembrandt made the acquaintance, and apparently secured the friendship, of a man who was of peculiar importance to him, inasmuch as it was from his

hands that the Prince's treasurer received the means for paying Rembrandt his fee. This was the Receiver-general of the States, as we should call him—Pieter Uytenbogaert. Rembrandt at once took a portrait of him in



Fig. 74. THE CIVIC STANDARD-BEARER. Painting in the collection of Baroness James de Rothschild, Paris.
(From a photograph by Franz Hanfstängl, Munich.)

a magnificent etching. Uytenbogaert, who is not to be confused with the preacher of the same name, of whom Rembrandt also took a portrait, is represented engaged in his official occupation. He sits in a chamber which is not without a certain degree of luxury in its furniture, although it only

serves for office work; the table is covered with a splendid cloth, and a fairly large picture hangs on the wall, representing the erection of the Brazen Serpent in the Wilderness. The picture, however, is partly concealed from our eye by a case to hold documents, which is arranged under the ceiling within reach of the Receiver's hand; from this case the scales for gold hang down over the table, and on the beautiful table-cover stand heavy bags of gold and a little, plain desk to hold the large register in



Fig. 75. REMBRANDT AND HIS WIFE. Etching of 1636. (Second state.)

which the high official, richly dressed in accordance with his rank, is entering figure after figure. He holds the pen in his right hand and with his left hand passes on one of the small bags, the weight of which has just been ascertained, to a young attendant who kneels to receive it, thereby showing that the young Free State had not yet got rid of all remains of the strict Spanish etiquette. On the ground we see a large iron-bound chest and several barrels, one of which, opened with the hammer which lies beside it, reveals its contents, which consist of gold-pieces. In the background we look through a sort of hatch into an ante-room, in which several persons are waiting for the Receiver to attend to their affairs (Fig. 94).

Rembrandt has given us his own portrait this year in the splendid etching which is perhaps the best known of all his portraits of himself, "Rembrandt leaning on his arm". The master is either standing or sitting behind a parapet which appears at the lower margin of the plate, and he leans on this with his left arm, round which the embroidered cape is picturesquely draped; he has put his right hand in his bosom and his head, which is covered with a cap pushed jauntily over the right ear, is turned over his left shoulder towards the spectator. The thoughtful brow is already furrowed, and the habit of a fixed and searching look has drawn



Fig. 76. YOUNG MAN SITTING AND MEDITATING. Etching of 1637.

the skin down above the eyelids; yet, in spite of such signs that youth is departing, the utmost freshness of mind and body is expressed in this face, which is adorned with a moustache and a little pointed beard and is framed by long, luxuriant locks of hair, which show no signs of thinning. This is the face upon which most modern representations of Rembrandt's person are founded; it served, for instance, for the statue of the master, which was erected at Amsterdam in 1852. Another portrait of himself, which was probably produced not much later, and only seems older in the features because of the expression, in which an assumed severity contends with natural weariness, presents an unusual appearance, because Rembrandt

has allowed his beard to grow freely on chin and cheeks. The face and hair are carried out quite exquisitely, with a peculiar delicacy, and the different stuffs are characterised in the most masterly way, the velvet of



Fig. 77. PORTRAIT OF A MAN. National Gallery, London.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

the cap, adorned with an ostrich-feather, the silk and the gold braid on the fur-lined cloak (Fig. 95).

We meet with a very strange subject among the etchings of the year 1639. "Youth surprised by Death" is the name of the print. Before a

young lady and gentleman fashionably dressed, Death suddenly starts up from the ground in the shape of a skeleton with a scythe and an uplifted hour-glass. Rembrandt must certainly have derived the suggestion for this



Fig. 78. PORTRAIT OF REMBRANDT BY HIMSELF, painted in 1637. In the Louvre.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

fanciful design from a sight of the Dance of Death by Holbein, whose woodcuts formed part of his extensive collection of works of art.

The masterpiece, however, of 1639 is the etching of "The Death of the Virgin", a very large, imaginative and effective print. The Virgin



Fig. 79. THREE STUDIES OF HEADS. Etching of 1637.

lies in a bed with a canopy over it. To her right stands a priest with a boy holding a staff and an acolyte who carries the train of his vestment. The priest is fantastically attired in a free adaptation of the dress of a Catholic bishop; letting his hands fall and folding them together, he gazes in earnest meditation at the dying woman; he has accomplished the duties of his calling. Still more in the foreground a reader sits at a table, in rich oriental garb; he has ceased to read, and he, too, turns his eyes towards Mary. For the latter has just drawn her last breath and her head and hands lie limply on the pillows. Peter, indeed, the foremost of the Apostles who are grouped together on the left side of the bed, along with women who are no longer able to restrain an outburst of grief, props up



Fig. 80. ABRAHAM DISMISSING HAGAR. Etching of 1637.

Mary's head with the pillow and attempts to keep life in her for a moment longer with some scent which he has poured on a handkerchief; the physician, who wears a turban, feels the pulse to try whether any trace of life remains. But the soul belongs no more to this earth; whilst everywhere in the chamber sorrow prevails for the close of an earthly life—specially beautiful is the figure of the disciple John, who stands with outspread hands—a cloud from heaven penetrates the beams of the ceiling of the chamber, full of light itself and flooding with light the bed and the lifeless body. In this light an angel floats down, accompanied by child-angels, to receive the soul of the purest among women. Whereas the figures below are carried out with a light hand, indeed, but still with great care, the angels and clouds are very slightly sketched; but that which might appear gross negligence in another artist serves here as a most effective and ingenious means of distinguishing from what is earthly

that which is unearthly, dreamlike and unsubstantial, that which the material eye cannot perceive and apprehend. The longer we look at this splendid print, the more does it take hold of us (Fig. 96).

Another very effective etching, "The Triumph of Mordecai", is not dated, but may perhaps be ascribed to the same period on the ground of its handling. Haman, who conceals his feelings of humiliation by strongly expressive gestures, escorts Mordecai as he rides on a white horse, holding a sceptre and wearing a gold chain round his neck, a hat fit for a prince and a mantle trimmed with ermine, through the people who throng round



Fig. 81. JUDAH AND TAMAR. Drawing in the Albertina, Vienna.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

him submissively and rejoice, as the mob ever rejoices in doing homage to the hero of the day, though it may have shouted yesterday in honour of his opponent, whose turn it is to be humiliated; King Ahasuerus looks on at the scene with Esther from a kind of balcony in a portico with pillars (Fig. 97). Part of the figures in this etching are only sketched in light outlines, but they are all the more admirable in expression on that account. We need not for this reason regard the plate as unfinished; Rembrandt let these figures remain in their present condition because he saw that the great space of light so secured was beneficial to the general effect of the design. Besides, Rembrandt left a number of plates unfinished and yet took impressions of them for collectors. These impressions have



Fig. 82. THE ANGEL LEAVING TOBIAS. Painting of 1637, in the Louvre.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

the peculiar attraction of enabling us to see the master's method of work in etching his plates. Particularly instructive in this respect is the print which has been entitled "Pygmalion", though it represents nothing more than a painter—possibly the master himself—sitting in his studio and making a life-study from a female model. The greater part of this etching is just planned out in outline so slightly that one can barely recognise what is intended; yet at the same time the upper part of the background is carried out with the utmost finish, carefully avoiding the outlines of the figures; we see with what absolute certainty the master knew from the first what he intended to do.

As if by way of relief from these creations, on which so much thought and emotion were expressed, Rembrandt was continually in the intervals etching scenes from the life of the streets. The comical figure of an old pauper with a high Jew's cap is dated 1639 (Fig. 98). So, too, the master did not give up his practice of drawing from the heads of paid models. Thus the wonderfully delicate etching of 1640 with the bust of an old man with a beard, who wears a cap of unusual form (known, in consequence, as "The man with the divided cap" or "Old man with a square beard"), is certainly not a portrait done to order but merely an exercise of the kind described (Fig. 99).

An etching of a figure in three-quarter length on a large scale, which represents a richly dressed and well-to-do woman with small eyes, thick lips, and fine, loosened hair, and is known as "The Great Jewish Bride" (Fig. 100) is regarded by some people as a portrait of Saskia. But the old designation may perhaps be more appropriate, in which case we have before us the portrait of a wealthy Jewess. For although Rembrandt was not too particular about the likeness in the studies which he made of himself and his wife, still it would be very remarkable if he made Saskia so plain as all that. How far more pleasing the painter's wife still was about 1640, although she had grown meanwhile stouter and more sedate in appearance, we learn from the fine portrait in the Dresden Gallery which shows her at the age of about eight-and-twenty, holding out a carnation towards us with a kindly look, while the left hand laid on her bosom, showing the pretty dimples in the finger-joints, seems to say that the little offering of a flower comes from the heart (Frontispiece).

One of the true masterpieces of portrait-painting by Rembrandt is dated 1640. This is the portrait of the gilder who supplied Rembrandt with frames for his pictures. This worthy craftsman, who knows how to carry himself with all the dignity befitting a citizen of Amsterdam, is portrayed so simply and straightforwardly with his homely, honest features, that no more faithful imitation of actual truth can be imagined; but, at the same time, the artistic charm which can be felt but not explained, and the indefinable poetry with which it is painted make it one of the greatest works of art in the world (Fig. 101). In contrast to the cheerful colouring of the portrait of Saskia painted about the same time, the harmony of

colours is here composed of the simplest tones. On a grey background are painted a black coat, a black hat, a white collar and a man's face with a healthy complexion; just these and nothing more. But then it was Rembrandt who harmonised the tones. The splendid picture was formerly in the collection of the Duc de Morny at Paris; since the sale of this collection in 1865 it has changed owners several times and is now in the hands of Mr. Havemeyer of New York.

Of several biblical pictures which Rembrandt finished in 1640, two, a Visitation and a Deposition from the Cross, are in the collections of



Fig. 83. TOBIAS STARTING ON HIS JOURNEY. Drawing in the Albertina, Vienna.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

English noblemen. A third, a Holy Family, is in the Louvre. This beautiful little picture is quite domestic and human in idea, and is named, in consequence, simply "The Carpenter's Family". The light, too, is not at all supernatural, but proceeds from a ray of sunlight of which the explanation is natural enough. But the manner in which Rembrandt has contrived, nevertheless, to raise the subject far above an everyday level by the poetry of light, so that we have an intimation of Divinity abiding in this family of an artisan, cannot be more fitly described than in the admirable words of Charles Blanc: "It is the dark workshop of a carpenter; a young woman holds a child in her arms, the grandmother bends down to look at her daughter's baby, and near the window, which affords a glimpse of a grey



Fig. 84. TOBIAS AND THE ANGEL. Drawing in the Albertina, Vienna.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

and overcast sky, the artisan is running his plane along a board. Although the sky is covered with clouds, a thin ray of sunshine has crept in through some invisible opening, which floods the child with a warm and golden light and then disperses into every part of the room, soon to be consumed once more by the deep shadow. The countenance of the young mother becomes bright and cheerful, that of the older woman is lit up, in its turn, by her sudden gladness, the body of the child seems to throw off light from itself. And why not? Are we not in the home of Mary? This is a Virgin-mother, and her Child the promised God."

About this time Rembrandt began to turn his attention to a new branch of conscientious study. We have already met with many proofs of the master's great gift for supplying his composition with an appropriate background of landscape composed in a poetical spirit. But in 1640, with the charming print of "The Canal", begins the series of etchings in which Rembrandt drew from nature, simply and accurately, portions of his native soil, and got artistic charm out of scenes which might have seemed to anyone else completely prosaic, but were not so to him because he saw them with an artist's eye. Among such intelligent transcripts from nature, there are two especially famous etchings, "The Windmill" and "The



Fig. 85. TOBIAS FRIGHTENED BY THE FISH. Drawing in the Albertina, Vienna.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

thatched cottage with the large tree", which belong to the year 1641. The first-named is also entitled "Rembrandt's Mill", because the erroneous supposition long prevailed that Rembrandt, as the son of a miller, was born in a windmill on the Rhine, between Leiderdorp and Koudekerk. Here we see nothing but a windmill, a few houses and a perfectly flat horizon; but what a refined and indescribable charm — the secret of true art which defies analysis — lies in the sincerity with which this scene is rendered — a portion of a monotonous region, which appears in itself so entirely devoid of charm (Fig. 102). The other etching, carried out on a considerably larger scale, makes a most poetical picture, as if by magic, out of an old, low cottage and a lime-tree, a stream gliding silently between its flat banks among the meadows, the sails of a few windmills visible in the distance and a town on the verge of the low horizon (Fig. 103). Three leaves from one of Rembrandt's sketch-books, in the collection of drawings at the Albertina, may serve as further examples of the master's fine feeling for landscape and his gift of seeing something for art to notice in the most insignificant objects (Fig. 104—106). For all that, this master of chiaroscuro makes hardly any use of effects of light and shade in such studies as he picks up on his walks; he draws almost invariably in mere

outlines, and with these outlines he can make all the suggestions of a painting; he makes us feel the peculiar charm of a pool of water, tranquil as a mirror, and the beauty of a soft haze shimmering in the far distance, as completely as if he were using all the resources of a colourist's art.

The year 1641 again produced a considerable number of portraits. Among them is the fine picture of the mother of Jan Six, afterwards burgomaster, which is still in the possession of the Six family at Amsterdam. There is also the double portrait, recently acquired by the Berlin Museum, of the Mennonite preacher, Anslo, and a lady in widow's dress listening in deep sorrow to the pastor's eagerly spoken words of consolation (Fig. 107). The picture in the Hermitage at St. Petersburg, shown in Fig. 108, may have been produced about the same time. This is the carefully painted portrait of an unknown, elderly lady in a fur cloak and black veil: her hard features have gained a certain attractiveness from Rembrandt's treatment, and the drawing of the hands is marvellously good. We learn the master's own appearance at this time from his splendid bust in the collection at Buckingham Palace (Frontispiece).

Among the etched portraits of 1641 one of an aristocratic young man sitting at his desk, extremely soft and like a picture in effect, is the most remarkable; he has just closed a book and is thinking now over something which he intends to write down (Fig. 109). Of the various other etchings of this year, one which represents the Madonna in the clouds is especially deserving of mention. Neither the Virgin nor the Child can be called



Fig. 86. TOBIAS TAKING THE GALL FROM THE FISH. Drawing in the Albertina, Vienna.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

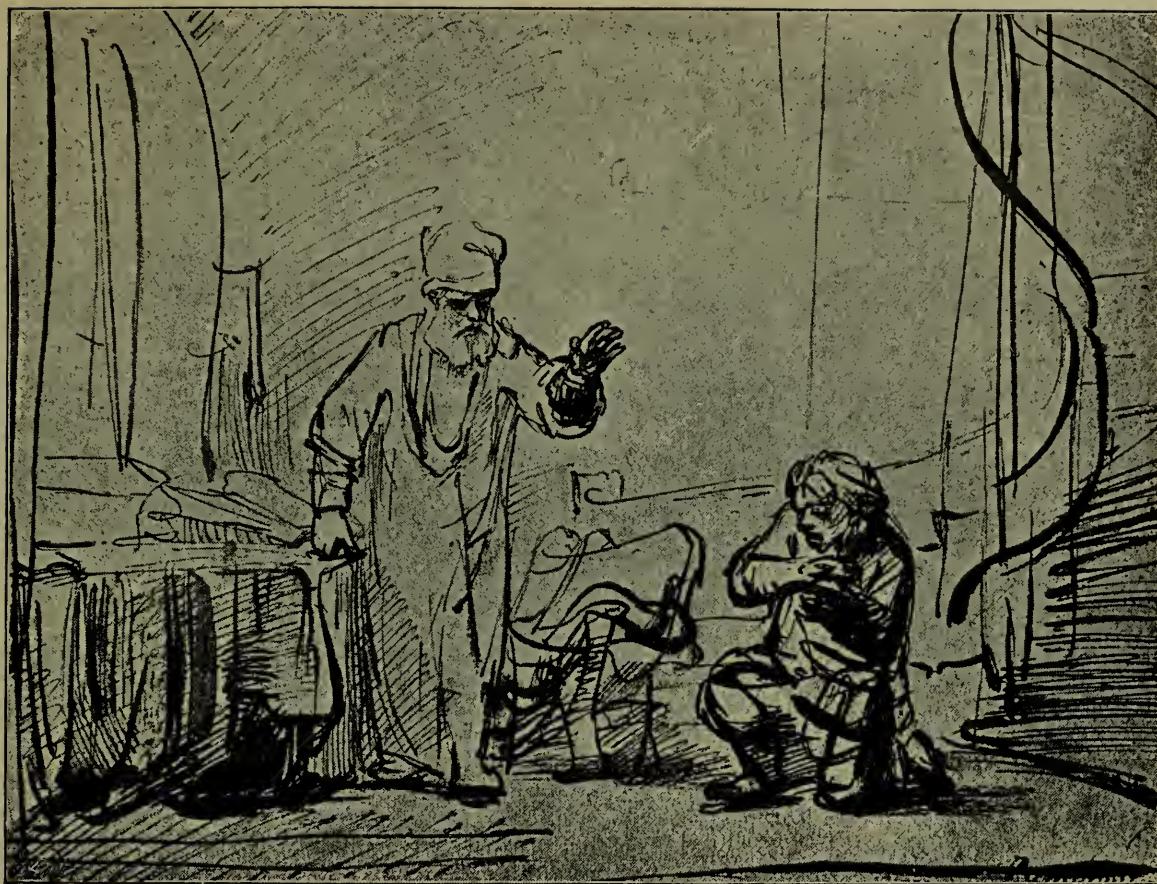


Fig. 87. THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT. Drawing in the Albertina, Vienna.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

beautiful, and the strong emphasis on the peculiarities of the Hebrew race and the marks of humble origin strike us as curious; but, for all that, there is an indescribable dignity in the devout, upturned face of the mother and in the magic light which shines from them both and illuminates the edges of the clouds, while the darkness of night rests upon all below. It is something very unusual in Rembrandt, to leave earthly soil so completely behind him as he has done in this composition. More frequently, in his effort to give a credible appearance to the biblical figures, he gives so purely natural a look to the Bible stories that we take them for nothing but scenes from daily life. A case in point is the very delicate little etching of 1641 which represents Jacob, in proud consciousness of his own rights, conferring with Laban, who will not permit him to depart home. Once the subject is recognised, the etching is seen to be masterly in its expression, though one cannot really be surprised that it is usually called simply "Three Orientals" (Fig. 110).

It is for expression, again, before all, that we admire the life-size painting of 1641, "The Sacrifice of Manoah", in the Dresden Gallery. The two old people, to whom the birth of Samson has been promised, kneel in pious humility before the sacrificial altar; the wife prays in quietness and confidence; the husband is equal to her in faith, but startled at the sight of the angel rising in the smoke of the sacrifice. The vision of the angel

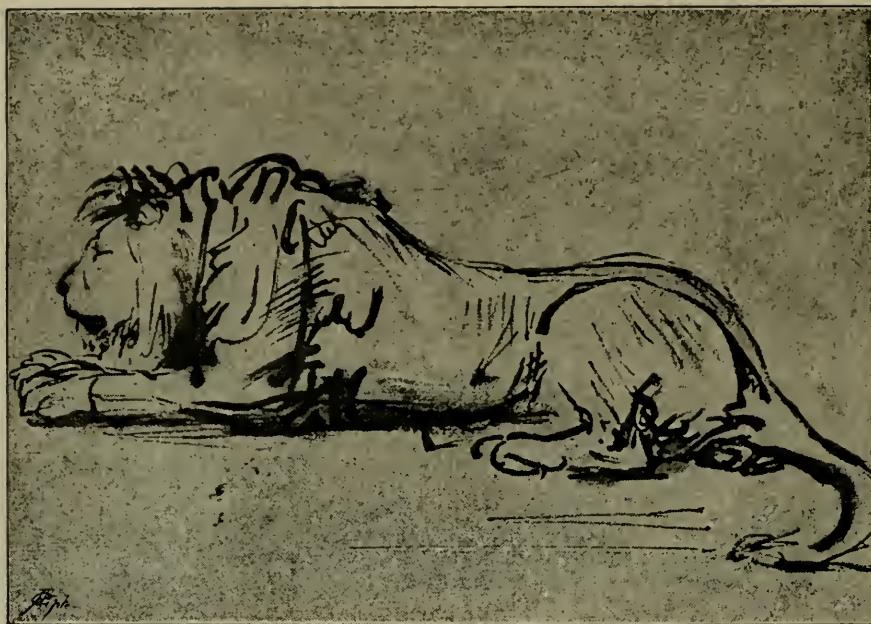


Fig. 88. STUDY OF A LION IN REPOSE. Drawing in the Albertina, Vienna.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

just fading out of sight is marvellously expressed; another moment, and he will be invisible; it is just a pity that the vanishing figure is so unfortunate in its outlines as somewhat to spoil the effect otherwise produced by a picture so magnificent in the simplicity of its composition and the severity of its colouring (Fig. 111).

Another biblical painting of 1642, also very grand and effective, is in the Hermitage at St. Petersburg. It represents the reconciliation of Jacob

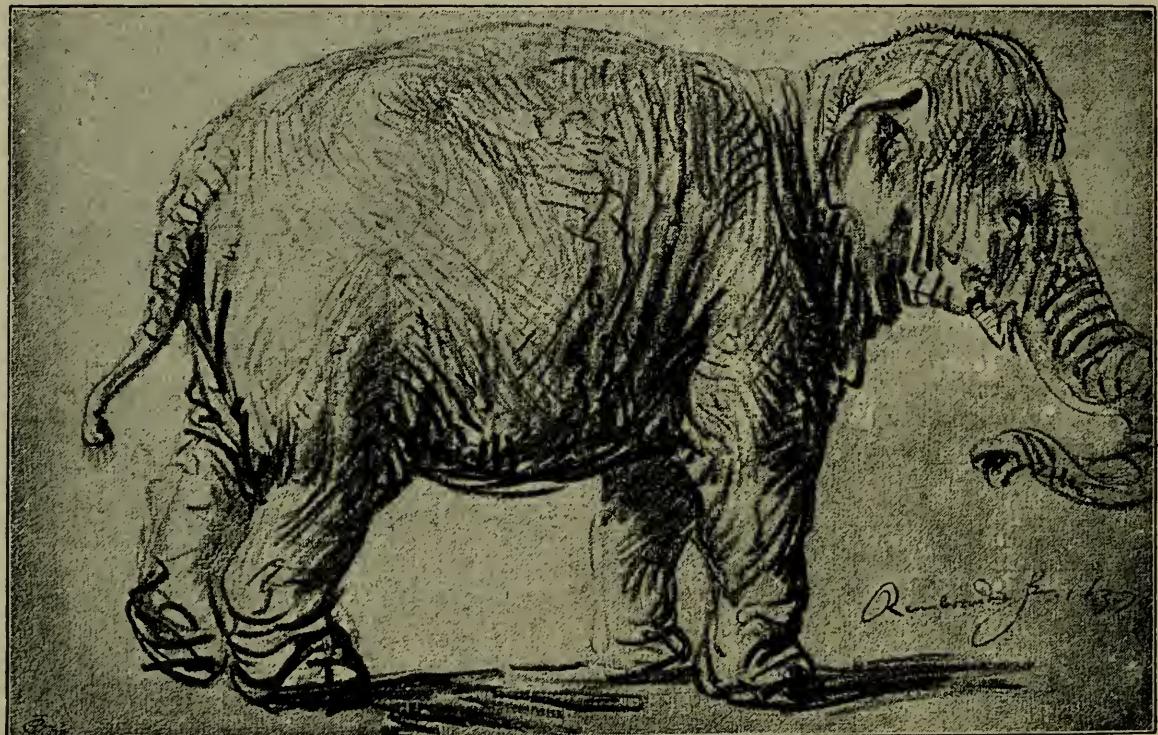


Fig. 89. AN ELEPHANT. Drawing of 1637, in the Albertina, Vienna.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)



Fig. 90. ELEAZAR AND REBECCA. Drawing in the Albertina, Vienna.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

and Esau: "Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him; and they wept." There is a strange suggestiveness about the picture. Dark clouds cover the heavens, which only in one place suffer an uncertain brightness to penetrate them; the retinues which accompany the two brothers disappear in the darkness; but, they are themselves in full light so that the rich ornament glitters and flashes on their dress and on Esau's sword. Nobody can say where such a light comes from with such darkness round about; it is the artistic expression of an emotion, the light of brotherly love, which breaks in like a sudden gleam from heaven on the night of discord and enmity (Fig. 112).

The effect of a mysterious light, for which there is no natural explanation, and the source of which is merely an artistic imagination, putting a self-created sun in the place of all that can shed light on earth, prevails from this time onwards in Rembrandt's compositions. It begins even to absorb the local colour of nature into its strange and magical golden tone.

Nowhere does this light appear so strongly, nowhere, again, so unaccountably, as in the master's largest and most celebrated picture, finished in

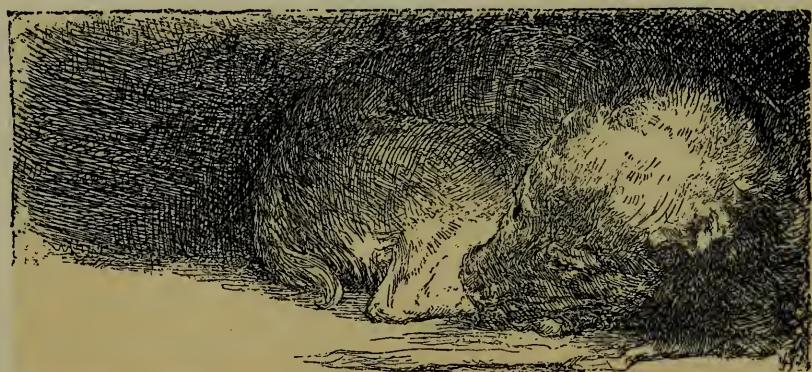


Fig. 91. THE (small) SLEEPING DOG. Etching.

the same year, 1642, which is famous all the world over by the inaccurate title of "The Night Watch", and is the pride and chiefest treasure of the Ryksmuseum at Amsterdam. Just as Rembrandt, ten years before, had painted the governors of the guild of surgeons with Professor Tulp in one portrait-group, so now he was commissioned to immortalize the captain of the Amsterdam trainbands, Frans Banning Cock, and his corps, in a large picture which was destined for their headquarters. But in this case there was a vastly greater number of persons in the assemblage than in the picture of the surgeons. Rembrandt's predecessors had solved such problems as well as they could by endeavouring to do full justice to each of the subscribers in letting him be seen and recognised just as clearly as the rest; the assemblage of all the persons at a banquet was the favourite method of bringing life into the arrangement, side by side, of so many portrait-heads under the same conditions of light. Rembrandt, however, created a picture full of life and animation by choosing the moment in which the corps is leaving the guard-house, in the act of falling into line, but still in complete disorder. And over this animated scene he poured his enchanted light, by the aid of which he created out of the portrait-group of the Amsterdam musketeers a perfectly unique work of art, which appeals to every beholder with extraordinary power. In the centre of the picture the captain, Frans Banning Cock, marches at the head of his company. A ray of full light falls on his chest, and his hand, raised as he converses with the lieutenant walking by his side, Willem van Ruytenberg, throws a sharp shadow from the side on the latter's light-coloured leather collar. The captain, in elegant, dark attire, bears only a staff as the emblem of his rank, while the lieutenant carries a partisan in his hand. Behind these two throng the musketeers in various costumes and equipments, with arquebuses and spears; sergeants with halberds are seen on both sides, and the drummer beats away busily at his drum. By the side of one of the musketeers, who is just engaged in loading his fire-arm as he walks, runs a boy with a saucy laugh, who has dressed himself up in a military head-piece. Two other children, of whom the most conspicuous is a girl in a light dress, from whose girdle hangs a white cock—a shooting-prize, as is supposed—are passing across the line of march at the foot of the steps, on which among others the standard-bearer, Jan Visser Cornelissen, shows his stately form. The names of the musketeers are written on a board attached to one of the pillars of the door. There are sixteen persons named here; we can calculate from this number the sum which Rembrandt received for his work, since we learn from a declaration by one of the parties concerned, made in a court of law in some affair relating to an inheritance, that the contribution of each member to the picture amounted to a hundred florins. The picture remained till the beginning of the last century in the head-quarters of the trainbands, which was situated on the Singel. Then it was removed to the Town Hall, and on this occasion it is said to have been cut down on either side, in order to adapt it to the space available between two doors. It is a fact that an

old copy in the National Gallery (which has been selected for our reproduction on account of its good preservation, owing to which many parts can be seen more clearly than in the original) shows more of the figure of the drummer than the original picture, whilst on the opposite side, behind

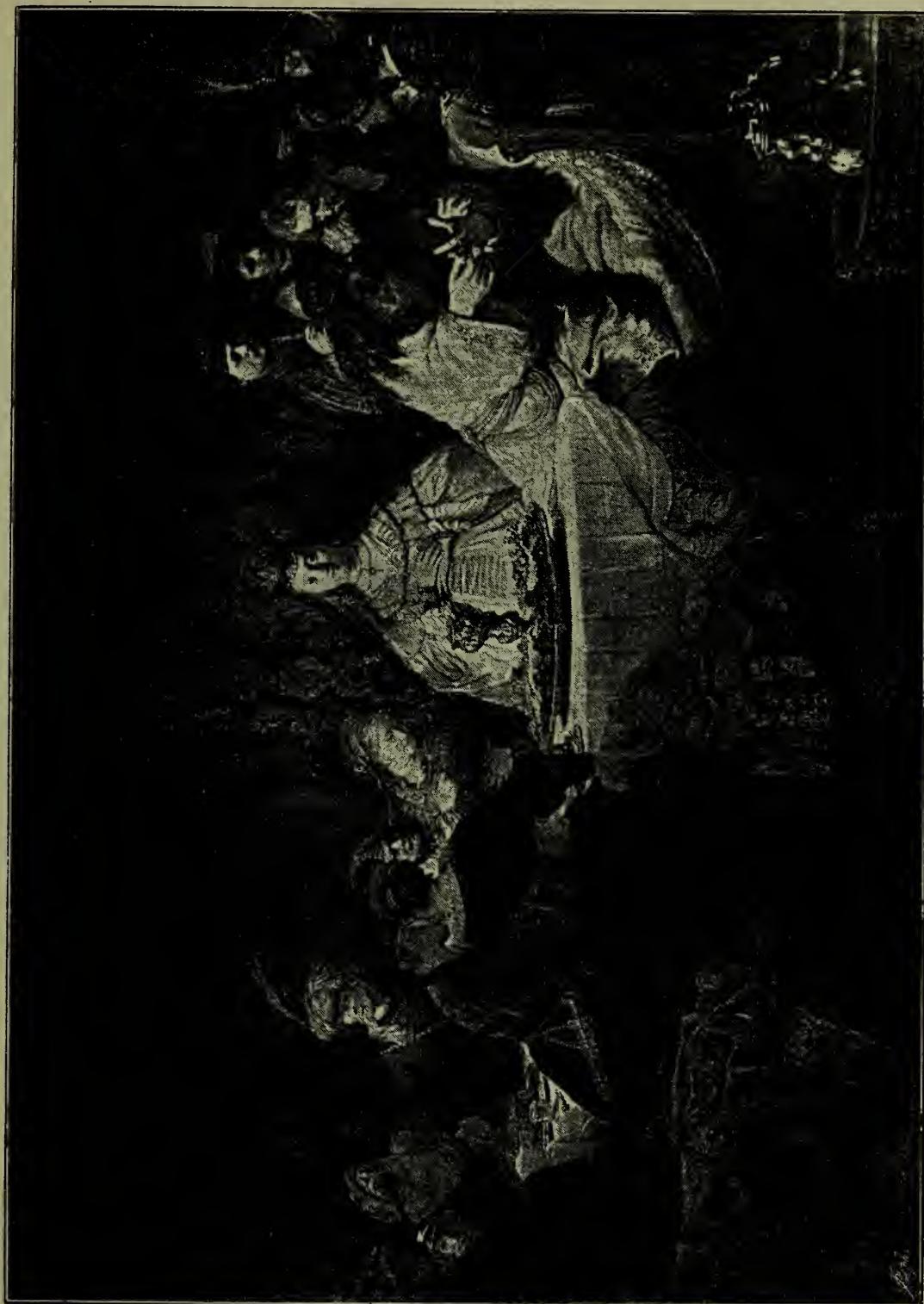


Fig. 92. SAMSON'S MARRIAGE. Painting of 1638, in the Dresden Gallery.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

the sergeant with a halberd sitting on a low wall, two additional figures are visible, which are completely missing in the picture at Amsterdam (Fig. 113).

In the same year which saw the completion of the picture which would be sufficient, by itself, to secure the immortality of Rembrandt's name, the



Fig. 93. JOSEPH TELLING HIS DREAMS. Etching of 1638.
(Second state, "with the black face".)

painter was bereft of his wife. During the seven years of their married life, Saskia had presented Rembrandt with four children, of whom only the last outlived his mother. This was a son, who was baptized by the name of Titus on the 22nd September, 1641. On the 5th June, 1642, Saskia, ill and bed-ridden, made her will. A fortnight later she was carried out of the house in the Breestraat, which Rembrandt had bought a few years before and furnished in a sumptuous and artistic style, and laid in the burial-ground of the Oude Kerk (Old Church). Rembrandt's consolation lay in hard work. To look at the etchings which are dated 1642, one might think that the master had worked off in them some of the emotions excited in him by the loss of his wife. Like the St. Jerome whom he represents as so lost in meditation over the Book of Books that he cannot part from it even though night is coming on and only a scanty glimmer of twilight penetrates through the window of his chamber—like St. Jerome, Rembrandt seeks to calm himself by solitude and the study of Holy Writ. He meditates on the Death of the Redeemer and sketches on copper in a few expressive strokes a striking picture of the Descent from the Cross (Fig. 114). He recalls



Fig. 94. UYTENBOGAERT, Receiver of taxes in Holland (also called "The Gold-weigher").
Etching of 1639.

to mind the promises of the Vanquisher of Death, and creates that most poetical etching which shows us the Saviour calling Lazarus back to life from his grave in a rocky cavern, not with a majestic command, as in the earlier etching, but by a mild and peaceful benediction (Fig. 116). Then his effort is to recall to himself so vividly the picture of the departed, that he can put her likeness on the canvas from memory, as if she still sat before him in the flesh. We cannot behold without emotion the beautiful picture in the Berlin Museum, painted in 1643, in which we see the painter's wife with all her charms enhanced and her most gracious smile.

The years 1644—1645 produced several more biblical pictures, as well as portraits. To 1644 belongs the picture in the National Gallery, "Christ and the Woman taken in Adultery", with its numerous figures and profound feeling. Among the works of the following year, the Berlin Museum possesses two little pictures, quite small, but attractive by their refinement of effect: one represents the wife of Tobit, bringing home the kid which her husband will not accept because he suspects her of having stolen it; the other, remarkable for beauty of colour, as well as of effect, shows the angel appearing to St. Joseph in a dream, and warning him to flee into Egypt.



Fig. 95. PORTRAIT OF REMBRANDT WITH A FEATHER IN HIS CAP. Etching.

Just as in 1643 Rembrandt had recalled his own Saskia to life in a picture, so in 1645 he revived the memory of his friend, the Preacher Jan Cornelisz Silvius, who had died so long ago as 1638, by reproducing his expressive features in a painted portrait, now the property of Herr A. von Carstarjen at Berlin, and also in a lifelike etching.

One of the finest portraits Rembrandt ever painted is that of an old Jewish merchant, sitting, in a dark-brown coat, a brown fur cloak and a fur cap, resting both his lean hands on a stick and fastening his cool and tranquil gaze on the beholder. This painting was copied repeatedly in quite early times; the original, dated 1645, is in the Hermitage at St. Petersburg, and there are good old imitations of it in the Galleries of London and Cassel. The Ryksmuseum at Amsterdam contains a no less excellent

picture, which must have been produced about the same time, in the portrait of the aged widow of Admiral Swartenhondt, who sits in an arm-chair, in a black silk dress trimmed with fur, a white ruff and a white

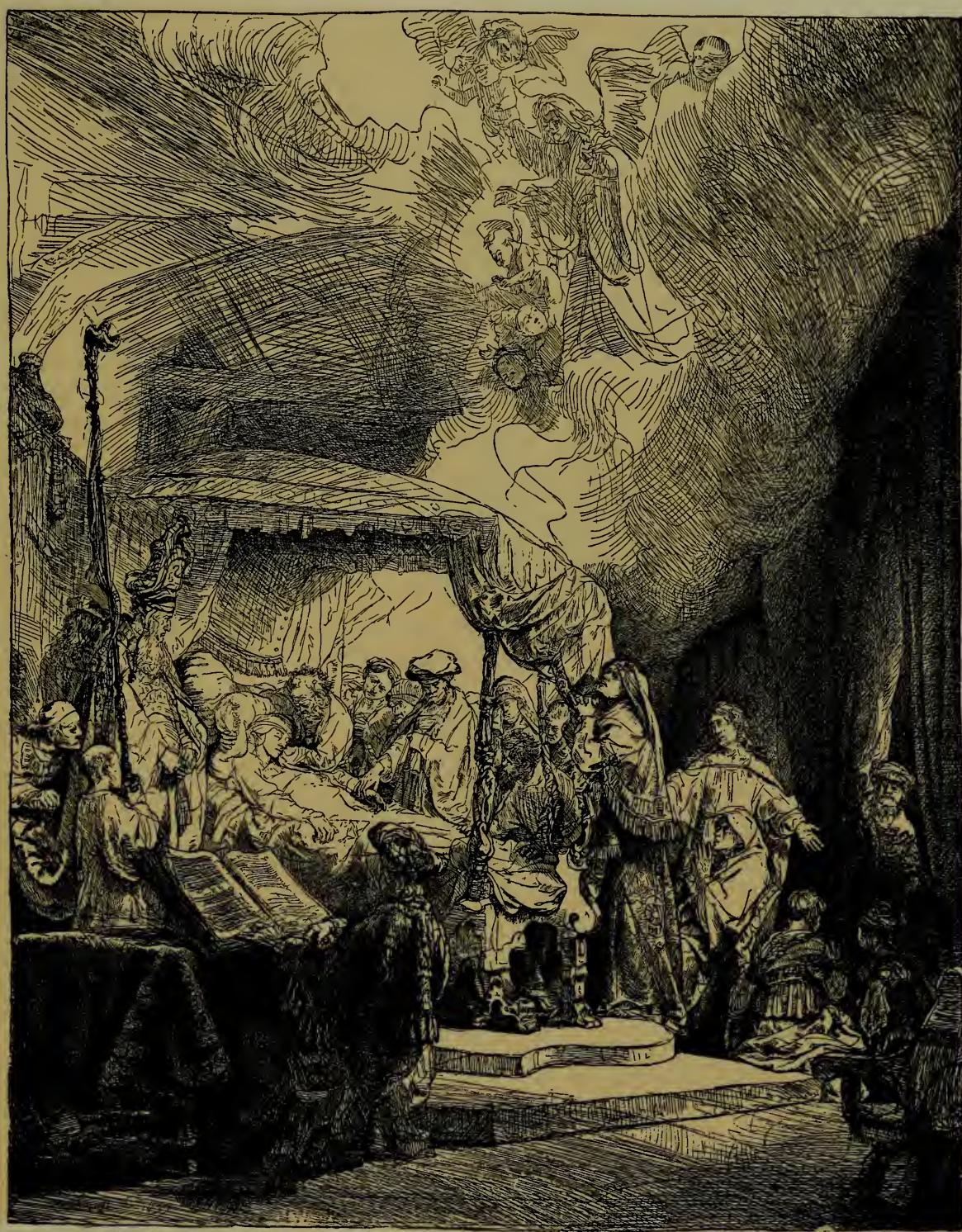


Fig. 96. THE DEATH OF THE VIRGIN. Etching of 1639 (greatly reduced).

head-dress; her hands are folded, and she seems to be reflecting on what she has just read in the Bible which lies by her side. A fine picture, approximately of the same date, is the portrait of an old Rabbi at Buckingham Palace (Fig. 115).



Fig. 97 THE TRIUMPH OF MORDECAI. Etching.

Fig. 98. A JEW WITH A HIGH CAP.
Etching of 1639.

When we compare such portraits as these with the earlier ones, we observe a striking change in the execution. Instead of the diligent care with which he used to shade off the colours one into another, there is a boldness and certainty which attains the full measure of finish with apparently no effort at all, for every stroke of the brush is laid unerringly on the place which it is meant to occupy. The broad style of brushwork, which is the astonishment and admiration of all who look at Rembrandt's work with a professional interest in technique, begins with the forties, at about the same time that the peculiar golden light makes its appearance in his painting.

Very striking is the small plate, etched in 1645, of Abraham and Isaac on the way to the scene of the sacrifice. They have reached the lonely mountain-top surrounded



Fig. 99. THE OLD MAN WITH THE SQUARE-CUT BEARD (also called "The old man with the divided cap").
Etching of 1640.

by clouds. Abraham, who appears in the rich oriental costume which Rembrandt had invented for his patriarchs, has placed the pail containing fire on the ground and turned round towards his boy; the latter, however, stands in amazement and holds the bundle of wood, which he has taken from his shoulder, irresolutely before him; his eyes look questioningly for the animal, which is to bleed under the stroke of the broad slaughterer's knife hanging at his father's girdle; his childish intellect cannot take in what his father says to him, with a face of which the muscles seem to twitch in the violent effort to restrain his emotion, and with hand pointing upwards, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering" (Fig. 117). There is another etching, connected with this in idea, though perhaps not produced at the same time, which indicates by a touching scene, which might be taken from everyday life, how hard a sacrifice it was that Abraham was then preparing to offer. Abraham sits at the door of his house and his bony hand passes softly over the round cheek of the boy whom he loves, and who cuddles between his father's knees, laughing in glee, with an apple in his hand. (Fig. 118 reproduces the rare first state of the etching.)

Several landscapes etched from nature are dated 1645. Among them is the "View of Omval", a particularly delightful print; a view, across the

water, of a little place with windmills and a church-spire, and in the foreground a picturesque clump of willows with a deep shadow. The very rare etching known as "Six's Bridge"—a canal with a few boats, a flat view in the distance, a bridge and a few small trees in the foreground—



Fig. 100. THE (large) JEWISH BRIDE. Etching.

deserves special mention for the sake of the little story connected with its origin. Jan Six often used to take Rembrandt with him to his place in the country. On one of these excursions, it is related that when the two friends were sitting down to table, they noticed that there was no mustard, and

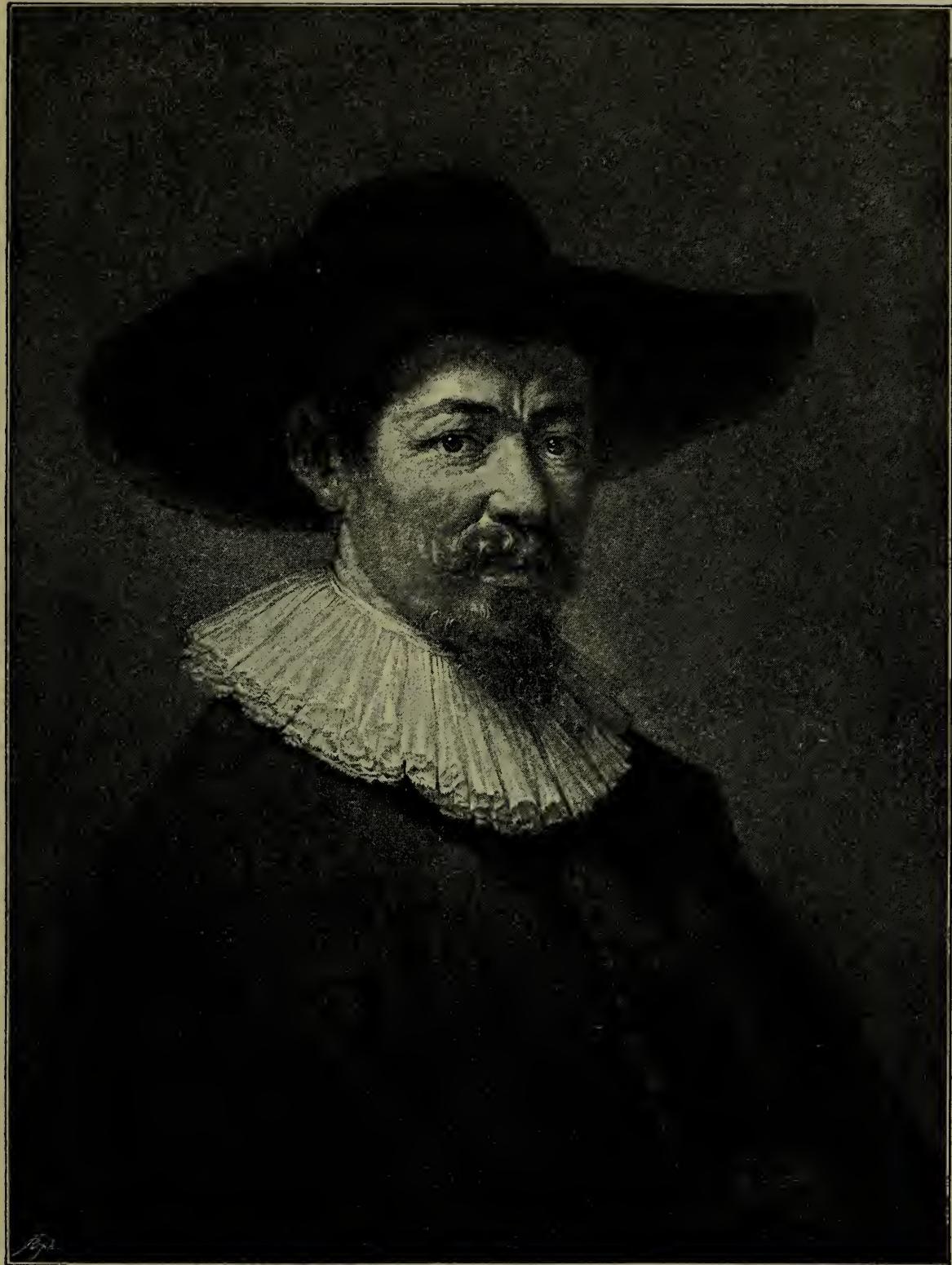


Fig. 101. PORTRAIT OF 1640, known by the name of Rembrandt's Frame-maker.
In the collection of Mr. H. O. Havemeyer, New York. (From a mezzotint by J. Dixon.)

Six sent his servant to the village to fetch some; Rembrandt, knowing how slow the servant was, had a wager with Six that he would finish an etching before the man came back; he took one of the copper plates which he was in the habit of carrying about with him, etched the view which offered itself as he sat by the window, and won the wager. The print is drawn in outlines in the manner customary with Rembrandt in his pen or pencil drawings of landscape from nature. Occasionally, however, we meet with landscapes from his sketch-books in which he has recorded strong effects of light and shade, when nature furnished him with similar appearances to those which his imagination was wont to create; as an example we may take the pen-and-wash drawing in the Albertina of a few old cottages taken in the garish light which is produced when the sun is low and pours its rays from under black and heavy storm-clouds (Fig. 119).

When Rembrandt painted pictures of landscape, he was wont, in contrast to his conscientious drawings, not to keep closely to actual fact, but to give free rein to his fancy. He has shown us, however, a simple piece of nature, painted as it was, in the delightful little winter-landscape of 1646 in the Cassel Gallery, which, with its three tones—blue sky, a brownish row of buildings and an expanse of ice shot with rays of golden light—takes us out into a sunny winter day in Holland, with skaters dashing about in glee in the brisk air.

Among pictures of figure-subjects of the year 1646, there are an "Adoration of the Shepherds" in the National Gallery, London, and a "Holy Family" in the Cassel Gallery. The latter introduces us, like the picture of 1640 at Paris and another of the same subject, painted in 1645, in the Hermitage at St. Petersburg, to the humble home of a working-man. But what an abundance of poetry, the mysterious poetry of the home—the artist has put into it, lifting what might seem a mere genre-painting far above the level of everyday life! The young mother is sitting modestly clad in the dress of the lower classes, clasping her little son, who whispers loving words into her ears. We seem to see her rocking her body backwards and forwards as she gazes into the fire burning on the hearth-stone, in which the earthenware pot of broth is being warmed up for the little one. A warm light, as if from the evening sun just spent, brightens up the room; its rays are focussed on to the fresh linen of the cradle, and throw off golden reflections over the humble bedstead. Outside, where the industrious father is still engaged in cutting up wood at the door, it is already cool and dusk; indoors, the fond words which mother and child are exchanging are accompanied by the pleasant crackling of the fire and the comfortable purr of the cat which lies on the hearth, but we seem to hear the evening wind rustling gently among the tree-tops which are seen through the window and the open entry. In order to give some outward sign that the painting is not to be regarded as an everyday scene of family life, Rembrandt has made it look as if it were a sacred picture, generally covered up and now just temporarily unveiled for the spectator's

benefit — the custom of covering church pictures with a curtain on week-days is still kept up in the Netherlands — ; he has painted a richly ornamented gold frame round the subject, to which a rod is attached at the top with a curtain of red silk which is supposed to veil the picture as a rule, but to be drawn aside at present. In the St. Petersburg picture of the preceding year, Rembrandt had employed another means of lifting the family group to the region of the divine; in that case there are bright angel-forms hovering over mother and child.

The Berlin Museum possesses a precious little picture of the year 1647, "Susanna at the bath". It is a production full of a strange charm of

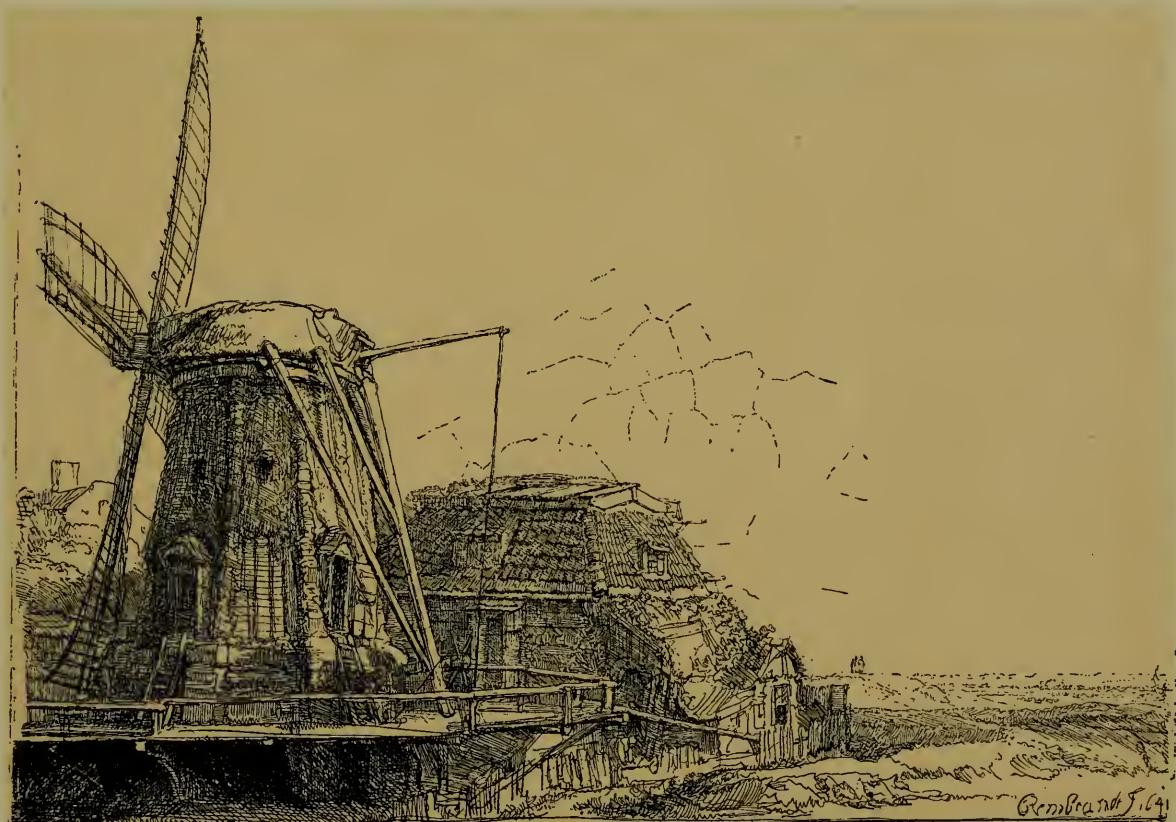


Fig. 102. THE WINDMILL. Etching of 1641.

colouring; the focus of light is the white, youthful form of Susanna, who has undressed without a thought of harm in the dark green shade of the garden, and laid her red robe by her side. No less admirable than the effect of light and of colour is the expression of the figures; Rembrandt has incomparably characterised the vile lasciviousness of the two elders, who creep up noiselessly from behind, like thieves.

In the same year Rembrandt produced the most famous of his portrait-etchings. He portrayed Jan Six, afterwards burgomaster, but then employed as secretary in the municipal administration, at full length, leaning against a window in his elegantly furnished dwelling, and reading through with attention some important document. There is an indescribable magic in the light, quite true to nature this time, which pours in abundantly through the large

window between the dark curtains, falling strongly on the man's head and on his hands, as they hold the piece of writing to the light, and then spreading over the floor, till it lights up a chair laden with further piles of documents, and touches with flashes of glancing brilliancy other objects placed farther to one side in the room.

If we may judge of Rembrandt's social position by the portraits which he took, he seems to have moved in the very best society of Amsterdam. With Six, at any rate, he was on terms of true friendship. On the other hand, he seems to have had but little intercourse with his fellow artists; at least, portraits of painters are of rare occurrence among his works. He stood apart from the other painters—except, of course, his pupils—in a manner of estrangement, and his reserve may have been accountable in a large measure for the curious reports which were circulated about him in their set. However, in 1647 Rembrandt painted a portrait of Nicolaes Berchem, painter of animals and landscape, who was, like himself, a collector of curiosities and works of art, as well as Berchem's wife (both pictures are now in the collection of the Duke of Westminster), and he etched the likeness of the painter Jan Asselyn, chiefly known for his Italian landscapes, who went among his friends, on account of his somewhat ill-formed figure, by the nickname of "het Crabbetje" (diminutive of 'crab'). There is an amusing story connected with this fine portrait-etching (Fig. 120), about the experiences of a forger. On the table on which Asselyn's right hand rests we see several books and also a brush and palette; originally Rembrandt had completed the painting-apparatus by an easel—in Dutch 'ezel'—which stood behind the table. Finding, however, that this erection spoilt the effect of the portrait, he took it out again, after he had taken a small number of impressions. Just on account of its rarity, the first state, "Asselyn met den ezel", was particularly prized by collectors and fetched high prices. This suggested to a German engraver the idea of producing such impressions by fraudulent means; he copied the portrait of Asselyn,



Fig. 103. THE THATCHED COTTAGE WITH THE LARGE TREE.
Etching of 1641 (greatly reduced).

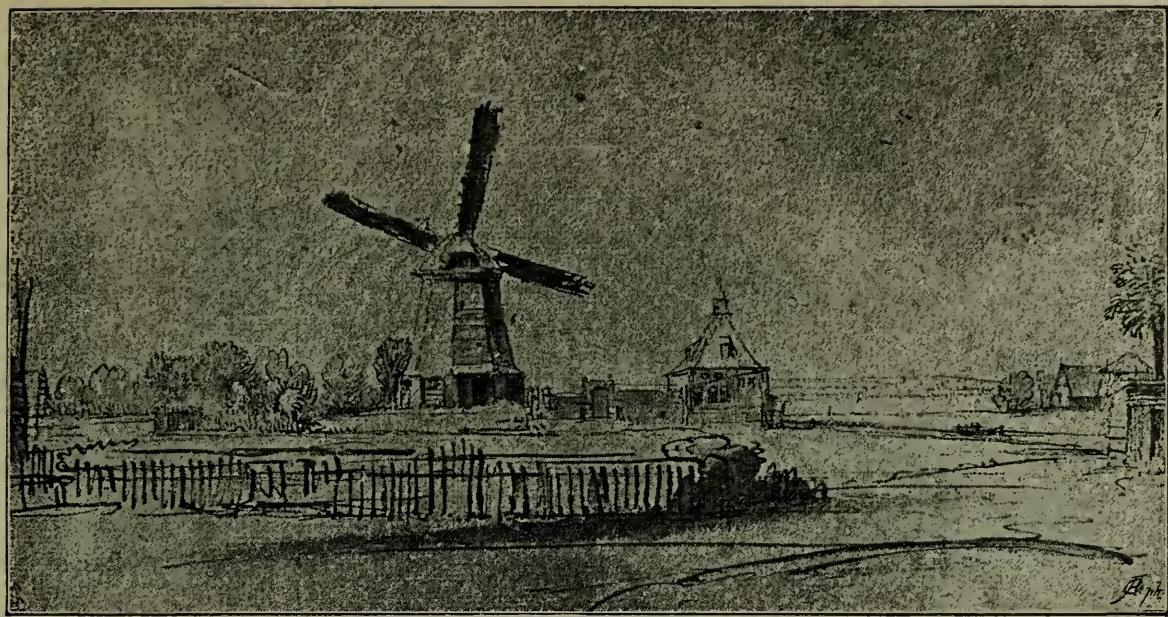


Fig. 104. LANDSCAPE WITH A WINDMILL. Drawing in the Albertina, Vienna.

(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

and added in the background — not an easel, but a donkey! He had mistaken the Dutch ‘ezel’ for the German ‘Esel’. Of course, he did not meet with much success among collectors of Rembrandt’s etchings, and they told him he had put in his own portrait by the side of Asselyn’s. Whether the story is true, we need not decide; but it is significant as a proof of the favour which Rembrandt’s prints enjoyed directly after their appearance, so that the production of deceptive imitations could be regarded as a lucrative business.

A painter with whom Rembrandt stood on closer terms of friendship was Hercules Seghers. This artist, of whom little else is known, has handed down his name to posterity principally by his landscape etchings, and Rembrandt did not disdain to take one of his friend’s poetical landscape compositions and put his own figures into it (Fig. 122).

It was a favourite custom at that time to give a higher significance to landscapes composed in a poetical style, by making them the scene of some scriptural or mythological event. Rembrandt himself was a master of the art of blending the suggestions of the landscape into harmony with the figure-subject, and so we must not be surprised if we occasionally meet with a picture by him which treats of a biblical subject in a manner which makes the landscape by far the most important element. The National Gallery in London has a charming evening landscape by him, in which the eye is carried past the dark border of a wood to a second, hilly distance; we feel the loneliness of the place and it occurs to us that a traveller who has watched the sun setting here will have to step out bravely to find shelter before the darkness with its menace of danger overtakes him; but the traveller whom we perceive has, in fact, nothing to be afraid of; it is Tobias, and the angel walks by his side.

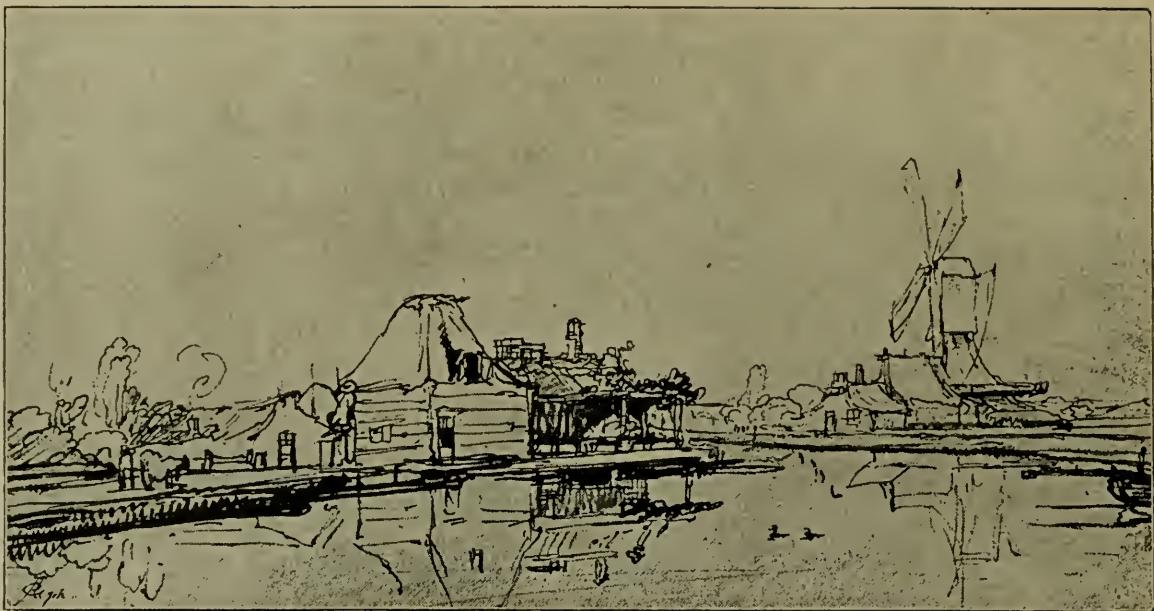


Fig. 105. LANDSCAPE WITH HOUSES BY THE WATER. Drawing in the Albertina, Vienna.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

The portrait of the learned physician Ephraim Bonus, a Portuguese Jew, painted in 1647, and now in the Six Collection at Amsterdam, is a grand masterpiece on a minute scale. The little picture is only eight inches high, hardly larger than the etching in which Rembrandt made the likeness of the same person known to a more extensive public.

Rembrandt painted his own portrait several times in 1647. He may still betray self-consciousness by the distinction of his pose, but the seriousness which had already long been marked on his features has begun to verge on a settled gloom, and even the eye, once so brilliant, looks dim

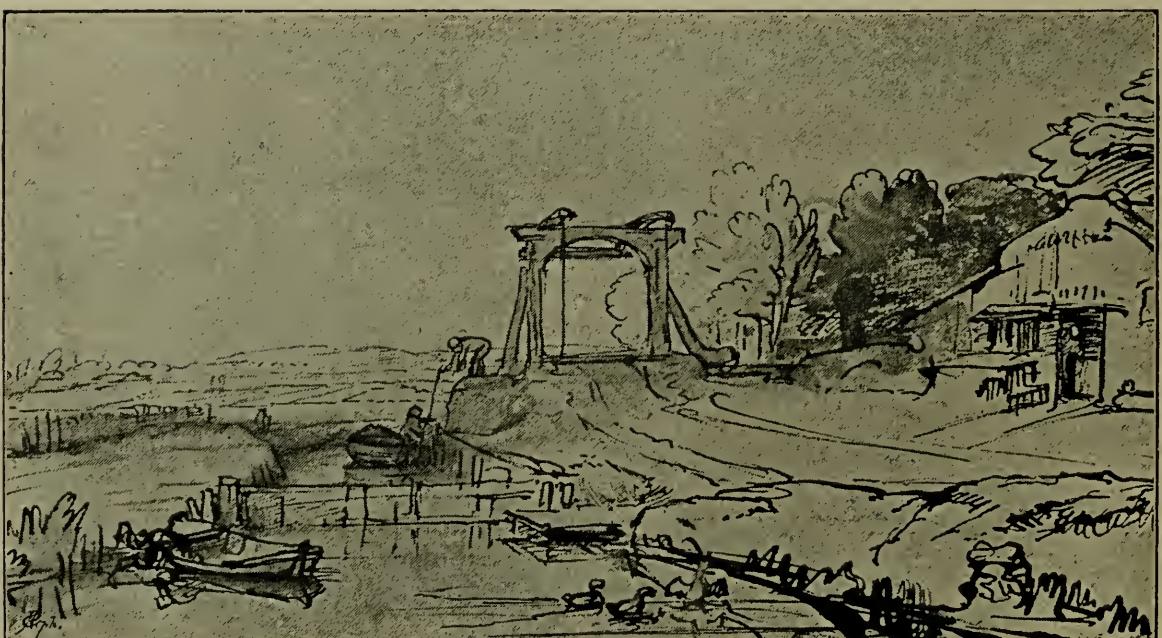


Fig. 106. LANDSCAPE WITH A CANAL AND DRAWBRIDGE. Drawing in the Albertina, Vienna.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

and fatigued. We should hardly suppose that such an abundance of creative energy still dwelt behind this deeply-furrowed brow (Fig. 121).

As a matter of fact, the year 1648 was one of the most productive in Rembrandt's life, and among the works which bear this date are many



Fig. 107. THE MENNONITE PREACHER CORNELIS CLAESZ ANSLO AND A WIDOW. Painting of 1641 in the Berlin Museum.

which count among the master's most successful creations. In an etching with a splendid effect of chiaroscuro, he shows himself busy at his work. He sits at a small window, with a round hat on his head, and draws in a sketch-book which lies before him; the absolute certainty of the artist's grip is expressed in his keenly observant look. But what he offers us in

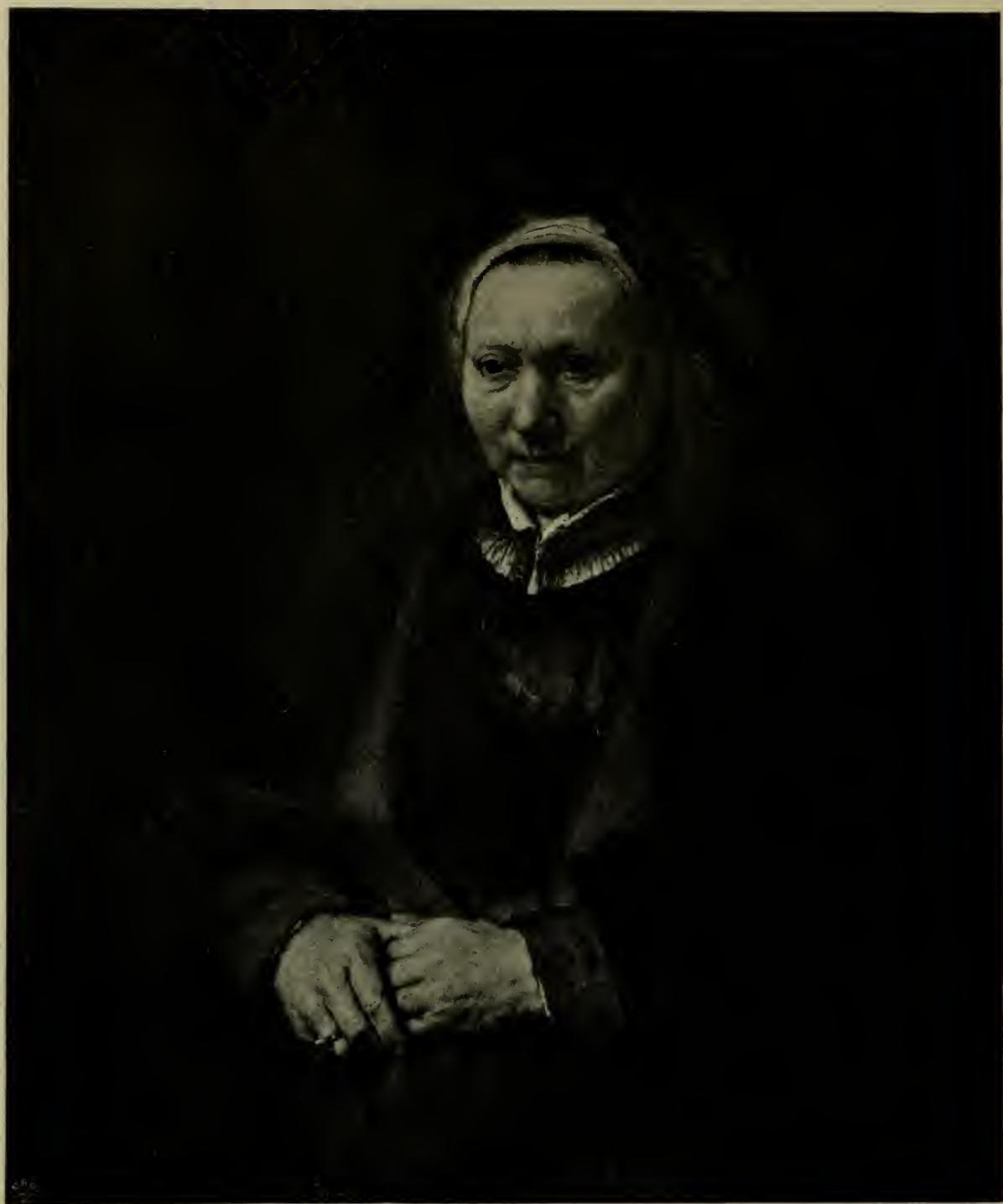


Fig. 108. PORTRAIT OF AN OLD LADY. In the Hermitage, St. Petersburg.
(From a mezzotint by Richard Earlom.)

this year is only in a small degree the immediate result of his keen observation. It is true that the intelligent rendering of things actually seen is not wanting. The valuable etching which shows us a view of a synagogue, in which various old Jews are moving to and fro and conversing in such a manner that we almost seem to hear the buzzing of subdued voices, is like a transcript from life (Fig. 123). The beautifully etched plate of a family of beggars receiving alms from a kind old man at the door of a house is one of the most perfect of Rembrandt's masterly scenes from



Fig. 109. PORTRAIT OF A MAN UNKNOWN (The man with a chain and cross).
Etching of 1641.

the life of the poor (Fig. 124). But Rembrandt's preference now was for penetrating into the world of the marvellous. We might say that the mysterious source of light itself in Rembrandt's works reveals itself to us like the apparition of a phantom, when we look at the incomparable etching of "Doctor Faustus". The fable of the over-curious Doctor Faustus, who penetrated supernatural secrets by the aid of the powers of evil, had been a favourite subject for popular treatment in Germany and England since the sixteenth century. The popular story-book which appeared at Frankfort on the Maine in 1588 had been translated into almost every western language, and so the story might very well be familiar to Rembrandt. The representation of Faust in pictorial art was less difficult then than now; for even the educated at that time believed in the possibility of a personal intercourse with the powers of darkness, and in the possibility of attaining by their aid

a higher knowledge than is otherwise vouchsafed to mortals; and there was hardly anyone, probably, who doubted the literal truth of the narrative in the book. Thus Rembrandt's "Faust" has the charm of the fullest originality, one might almost say the charm of perfect truth. We look into a dark room, crammed with all the appurtenances of a scholar; the doctor has been pondering day and night over the secrets of the black art, and has not found time to change his morning dress for a more ceremonious attire. He has at last succeeded in his incantation; a radiant disk of light gleams forth from the dark vapours which veil the lower part of the



Fig. 110. THE THREE ORIENTALS (Jacob and Laban).
Etching of 1641.

large window, and casts a dazzling ray on the shrunken face of the doctor. The latter has sprung up, and with both hands pressed on the table and his body bending forwards, gazes with keen excitement and suspense at the mirror displayed to him by dim hands which have shaped themselves out of the vapour beneath the luminous disk. Will his greed for knowledge be satiated now? Is the magic mirror merely repeating the cabbalistic words which appear in the midst of the ghostly light? The single word intelligible to us in the concentric series of characters is the name of the first man; while in the midst of the light there appear between the four arms of a cross the letters INRI. Does this signify "Jesus Nazarenus Rex Iudeorum", and is the adept in the black art thereby receiving an admonition that the



Fig. III. THE SACRIFICE OF MANOAH. Painting of 1641 in the Dresden Gallery.
(From a photograph by Franz Hanfstängl, Munich.)

offspring of Adam must be content with the revelation of christianity, and not make further researches after the incomprehensible? It is not improbable that this thought may be concealed in the design, considering the strongly Christian bent of Rembrandt's mind (Fig. 125).

The master was led to take up a pagan subject by the publication of the tragedy of "Medea", composed by his friend Six. It was for this that he produced the large and fine etching "The Marriage of Jason and Creusa". Rembrandt had not studied archaeology. He imagined a wedding in the legendary age of Greece as a religious ceremonial corresponding in its forms to the ritual of the Christian church. We look into a fantastic building with columns, in the arches and vaults of which, in spite of the oddness of their construction, dwells the peculiar poetry which clings to the lofty vaults of mediaeval churches. In the raised choir stands the altar, on which the sacrificial flame is kindled; over it is enthroned the statue of Juno, goddess of marriage, recognisable by the peacock at her side. By the altar stands the priest, whose headgear and staff are fantastic adaptations of the insignia of a bishop, and the choir of singers have taken up



Fig. 112. THE RECONCILIATION OF JACOB AND ESAU. Painting of 1642 in the Hermitage, St. Petersburg.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

their position in a tribune opposite to the altar. A festal brightness pours through the lofty windows into the spacious building, and only the circuit of the choir behind the altar remains in shadow; here we perceive a figure richly attired, whose train is borne by a little page. The features of this lady are dimly seen in the shadow, but her stealthy and unseen approach has something uncanny about it, and, even without recognising the expression of her face, we feel a foreboding of the ruin which she brings. Even if we could not guess that this is the forsaken Medea, the verses inscribed underneath would inform us of the fact. They may be translated as follows:

Here to Creusa Jason troth has plighted;
 Medea, Jason's wife, unjustly slighted,
 Is urged by wrath with vengeance to pursue them.
 Lovers, who break your vows, one day ye'll rue them!

The first impressions of this print show Juno's statue bare-headed; afterwards the artist thought it necessary to give it a more dignified ap-



Fig. 113. THE NIGHT WATCH. Picture of a corps of musketeers at Amsterdam, painted in 1642. (From an old copy, taken before the picture was cut down at the sides. Photograph by Braun & Co.)

pearance by placing a crown on the head; in the third state, Rembrandt's signature, the date 1648, and the verses quoted above have been added (Fig. 126). The etching was among those of which the amateur thought it necessary to possess at least two states, a "Juno without the crown", and a "Juno with the crown".

Considering the great value which collectors already set on all his



Fig. 114. THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS. Etching of 1642.

etchings, so that they were always on the look-out for new ones and were eager to have them, Rembrandt might be pardoned for finishing off plates which he had ceased to care for and so had left unfinished, by signing his name on them and bringing impressions of them into the market. A remarkable instance of this is the "Large St. Jerome" of 1648, a print in which hardly anything is at all finished except a willow-trunk in the foreground. It is true that even in this condition the print has indisputably a high artistic value; for the face of the Saint, who is working away, with his spectacles on, at his translation of the Scriptures, is a marvel of expression, though merely suggested by a few strokes.

Rembrandt painted the appearing of the Saviour at Emmaus twice during this year. One of these pictures is in the Museum at Copenhagen; the other, one of the most eloquent of Rembrandt's masterpieces, in the Louvre. The moment represented is that of the recognition. Quite over-powered, the two disciples gaze at the Redeemer, who raises his eyes as he breaks the bread, in a flood of mysterious light; his features still show signs of the suffering which he has undergone on earth. There is an effective contrast to the reverential awe with which the disciples recognise the marvellous occurrence, in the restrained and timid astonishment of the young

servant, who is just about to place a dish on the table, and who cannot understand the amazement of the other two; we seem to see his eyes travelling from one to the other and back to the third person in the group (Fig. 127).



Fig. 115. PORTRAIT OF A RABBI. Picture at Buckingham Palace.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

The collection at the Louvre contains another equally fascinating masterpiece of the same year in the picture of the Good Samaritan. This is the master's most successful rendering of a subject which he handled

repeatedly. It is evening; the inn, which lies by the high road outside the gate of a town, is beginning to be busy; several horses are tied up against the house near the fountain; and the guests, having heard the sound of more hoofs approaching, have gone to the window of the inn-room, with curiosity which has become a habit, to see who is arriving. The hostess hurries officiously to the steps of the house to welcome the new arrival. It is a well-dressed man that mounts the steps, but it is not he that she



Fig. 116. THE (small) RAISING OF LAZARUS. Etching of 1642.

is to entertain, but the unhappy wounded man whom he is tending with loving care. The victim of the assault is a picture of misery; he groans with pain at every movement of the two servants who have just lifted him off the horse. Nobody can behold him without compassion, except the ostler who holds the horse, and with the calmness of youth, and in mere curiosity, stands on tiptoe in order to get a better view over the back of the horse (Fig. 128).

Events of importance in the history of the world had little or no effect, as a rule, on the Dutch painters of the seventeenth century. But the con-

clusion of the Peace of Westphalia, which brought the final recognition of independence for the Free States of the Netherlands, was celebrated not only by poets, but by painters too. For the most part the commemorations of the event in painting were confined to representations of banquets which were held to celebrate the Peace. Rembrandt, however, devoted a great allegorical composition to the event. It is a sketch, intended, perhaps, to be carried out on a large scale, but never realised; it is preserved in the Boymans Museum at Rotterdam, and goes by the name of "La Concorde du Pays". Allegories, to say the truth, were not in Rembrandt's



Fig. 117. ABRAHAM AND ISAAC ON MOUNT MORIAH. Etching of 1645.

line, and what we look upon is a medley of magnificence and eccentricity. The painter has not succeeded in making intelligible in detail the abundance of thought which he intended to express, and whole piles of commentaries have been written in the attempt to explain this picture, which stands alone among Rembrandt's works.

The principal work of the year 1649 is an equestrian portrait in the collection of Lord Cowper at Panshanger, which is said to represent Marshal Turenne, who was, in fact, staying in Holland in that year.

Several of the master's exquisite etchings of landscape are dated 1650:



Fig. 118. ABRAHAM CARESSING ISAAC. (First state.)

the beautifully drawn "Landscape with the Tower", which takes its name from the ruins of an old tower which are visible in the distance beyond a cottage surrounded by trees, and the little print, so charming in its simplicity, of "The Canal with the Swans". In the latter etching the master has added to his composition of homelike meadows, bordered with copses and traversed by calmly flowing water, a range of high hills for which he had no pattern in nature (Fig. 129). There is a similar combination of Dutch landscape with tracts of country for which he found his materials in the portfolios of his friends who had been in Italy, in Rembrandt's most famous painted landscape, produced about the same time, the large landscape with ruins on a mountain in the Cassel Gallery. There is a plain lying in a dim, romantic light, with a stream meandering through it, spanned by a bridge and enlivened by a gently gliding boat and several swans; by the further bank lies an empty, richly decorated gondola; on the near bank sits an angler, while a solitary rider pursues the road which lies along the

stream. Beyond the water appear the red-tiled roofs of a farm, lying in the solemn calm of evening among thick clumps of trees; more in the foreground there stands a windmill. Behind the buildings the ground rises to a considerable ridge, which falls away on one side in a steep cliff. Near this declivity the eminence is crowned with masses of ruins, which culminate in a lofty and prominent building, which looks like the remains of an ancient circular temple. A wonderful tone of golden twilight unites mountain and valley; in the far distance cloudy heights fade into the pale blue of the sky, which retains the last gleams of the sun, already set, and is partly veiled by a thin layer of clouds, still bright along the edge. Seldom, perhaps, has any landscape-painter, old or new, succeeded in making so profound an appeal to the emotions; there is a quiet solemnity, a touch of melancholy, about the picture, which grows upon us the more irresistibly, the longer we behold it (Fig. 130). Among the landscapes which appeal to the emotions we must place the etching, splendidly drawn and full of colour, with the unfinished figure of St. Jerome, deep in the study of the Bible, and the lion near him, looking about like a watchful guardian. On account of the peculiar, melancholy poetry, the wealth of form and the minute detail in the execution of the landscape, the print is distinguished by the title: "in the manner of Dürer" from Rembrandt's numerous other prints of St. Jerome (Fig. 131).



Fig. 119. LANDSCAPE IN STORMY WEATHER. Drawing in the Albertina, Vienna.
(From a drawing by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)



Fig. 120. JAN ASSELYN, painter. Etching of 1647.

There are a few remarkably good etchings of 1651. First the wonderfully delicate print of "The blind Tobit", the most striking and affecting picture of the helplessness of a man struck blind, who has to find his way about his own room by groping before him with his staff and his hand. Then the admirable portrait of Clemens de Jonghe, who was one of the most famous printsellers and publishers of his day and who looks at us with so decided and calm an expression in his clever eyes (Fig. 133). A splendid painting in the Louvre, the portrait of a young man unknown, bears the same date (Fig. 132). The Ducal Gallery at Brunswick possesses a biblical painting of this year, the Risen Christ appearing to the Magdalen, which is very grand and striking in its effect.

A magnificent picture of 1652 belongs to the Cassel Gallery. This is the half-length portrait of Nicolaes Bruyningh, who held an appointment as Secretary to the Debtors' Division of the Courts of Justice at Amsterdam. He looks a cheerful young man, as he sits in a fine black satin suit; he has turned round on the chair with a lively movement, and looks before him smiling; an abundance of hair, somewhat light in colour, falls in curls round his good-natured face (Fig. 134).

There is a delightful little print of the same date: "Christ at the age of twelve disputing with the doctors". The etching is quite slightly sketched, with hardly any hint of picturesqueness of effect, and yet it fascinates us in a way which is hard to describe. We hear the boy's gentle and intelligent words; we see the manifold emotions with which the old Jewish doctors



Fig. 121. REMBRANDT AT THE AGE OF FORTY.
Mezzotint by Wrenk from a picture which is perhaps not by the master himself,
but by his pupil Ferdinand Bol.

— each a study of character — receive them; ranging from attentiveness to mockery, from the arrogance of superiority to earnest reflection. Another equally attractive composition of the same subject appears in a hasty, clever sketch in the Albertina, which emphasises still more strongly the contrast between the youthfulness of the boy and the Rabbis' pride in their learning (Fig. 135). It is altogether a wonderful treat to look at the numerous composition-sketches by Rembrandt in this collection at Vienna, which far surpasses any other in richness. We find the most astonishing proofs of Rembrandt's incomparable power of expressing very much in a few strokes;



Fig. 122. LANDSCAPE WITH THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT. Etching.
Landscape by Hercules Seghers, figures by Rembrandt.

as one of the most telling examples, we may cite the hasty pen-drawing of Christ arraigned before Caiaphas, who rises from the seat of judgment and exclaims: "Ye have heard the blasphemy, what think ye?" (Fig. 136).

If we find comparatively seldom any date from 1649 to 1653 on the works of Rembrandt, it does not follow that the master was any the less busy during these years. On the contrary, several of his most admirable productions come into this period, as we can declare with certainty by comparison with others, even though the date is absent. Among these is the splendid picture in the Berlin Museum, the subject of which is the vision of Daniel by the river of Ulai (Dan. VIII, 3), a masterpiece in a grand and romantic style. The prophet kneels in a lofty mountain land-

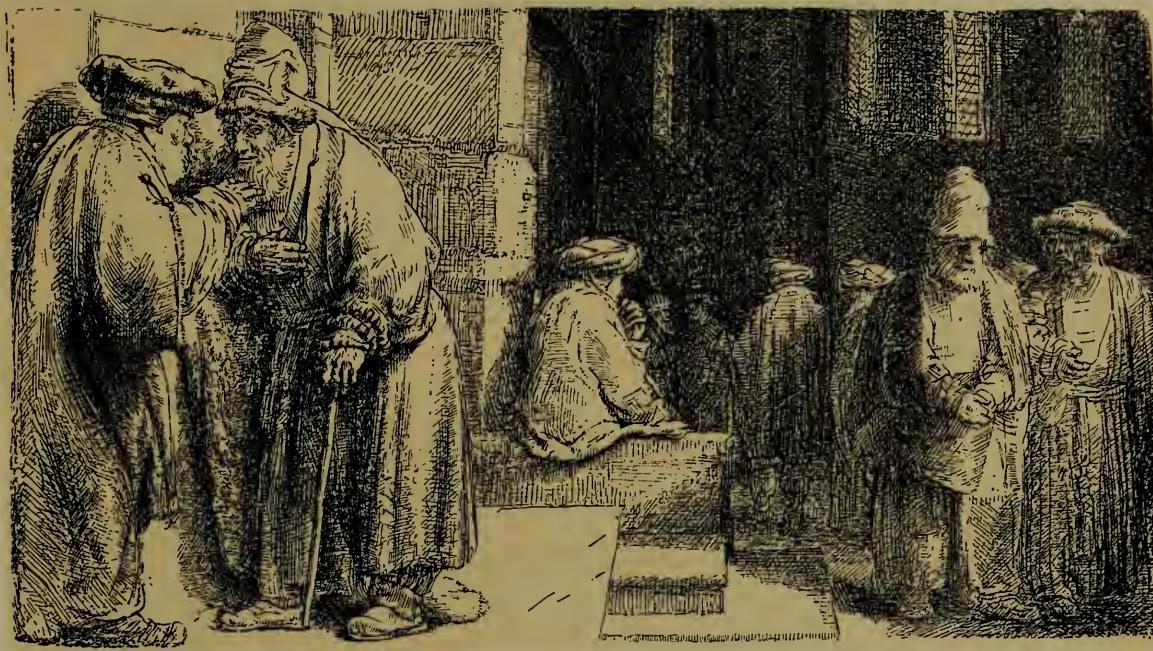


Fig. 123. JEWS IN THE SYNAGOGUE. Etching of 1648.

scape, wearing an olive-coloured coat, and awaits in reverential awe what the angel, who stands behind him in shining white raiment, is about to show him; in a dim light on the other side of the ravine appears the ram with the strange horns. Certain biblical paintings with life-size figures in the Hermitage at St. Petersburg are also assigned to this period, "Jacob weeping at the sight of Joseph's blood-stained coat" and "The Lord appearing to Abraham in the vale of Mamre". In the latter picture the unusual beauty, for Rembrandt, of the figures of the angels is much admired. The master has left a highly poetical composition of the same subject in a pen-drawing, now in the Albertina. Jehovah himself is distinguished by his aged and sublime appearance from his youthful attendants; the whole group of the three men before whom Abraham has prostrated himself on the ground forms a magnificent and radiant vision, while, in the earthly environment of the scene, the suggestion of "the heat of the day" is vividly realised by a few washes of Indian ink; the deep tone of the cloudless sky, from which every object on which the light falls stands out clear,



Fig. 124. THE BEGGARS AT THE DOOR OF THE HOUSE. Etching of 1648 (reduced).

makes us feel the glow of summer, and the shade of the tree, under which the patriarch is about to entertain the celestial visitors, looks very inviting (Fig. 137).

Rembrandt, however, put his best work at this time into two large etchings which display the Saviour engaged in works of mercy. One of the two prints shows Christ as a teacher. No artist has ever been able to give a more sympathetic picture of love for mankind than that of the Saviour standing in a dark space on a brightly lighted eminence and



Fig. 125. DR. FAUSTUS. Etching of 1648 (reduced).

speaking with upraised hands to the people gathered round him. Only a few of the audience are decently dressed; the majority, by far, of those who stand or sit attentive to his words are people burdened with a lot of extreme poverty; the building itself is a wretched place, and it is a wretched street into which we look through a low gateway. It is the weary and heavy laden who are being refreshed; what riches must the words be lavishing, to which these hearers listen with so little emotion! With bright sunlight resting on the circle of listeners amidst the dark surroundings from which the sublime and gentle form of the teacher stands



Fig. 126. THE MARRIAGE OF JASON AND CREUSA. Etching of 1648 (reduced).

out brightly, the whole forms a wonderful painter's poem on the text: "I am the true Light". (Fig. 139.)

The other and larger print is a picture, inspired by genius, of the events narrated in the nineteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew. Once more we look into a dark room, and in the midst the Saviour stands in bright light among thronging crowds of people whom his presence has attracted. "Great multitudes followed him and he healed them there." Sick folk of every kind have taken up their position at his



Fig. 127. THE DISCIPLES AT EMMAUS. Painting of 1648, in the Louvre.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

feet, and others are approaching, or being carried towards him, if they can no longer drag themselves along. We hear the entreaties of those who are imploring help in confidence and faith for themselves or their kin, and we cannot doubt that help is being granted to them all. The poor sick folk fill the right half of the design; it is to be supposed that many more will be approaching through the doorway, which we see there. On the other side we perceive, together with the disciples, who hang on their master's lips and take in his words with simple sincerity, a group of men of quite a different sort, handsomely clad in flowing raiment, with an expression of self-consciousness and the conceit of wisdom on their faces; they are speaking one to another with lively expression and gesture, and cannot agree. These are the Pharisees, who have come to tempt Jesus.

What excites them is the utterance they have just heard, which has baffled their attack: "All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given". With the words: "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it", the Saviour has left them alone, and turned to a group which draws near to him from the foreground. "Then were there brought

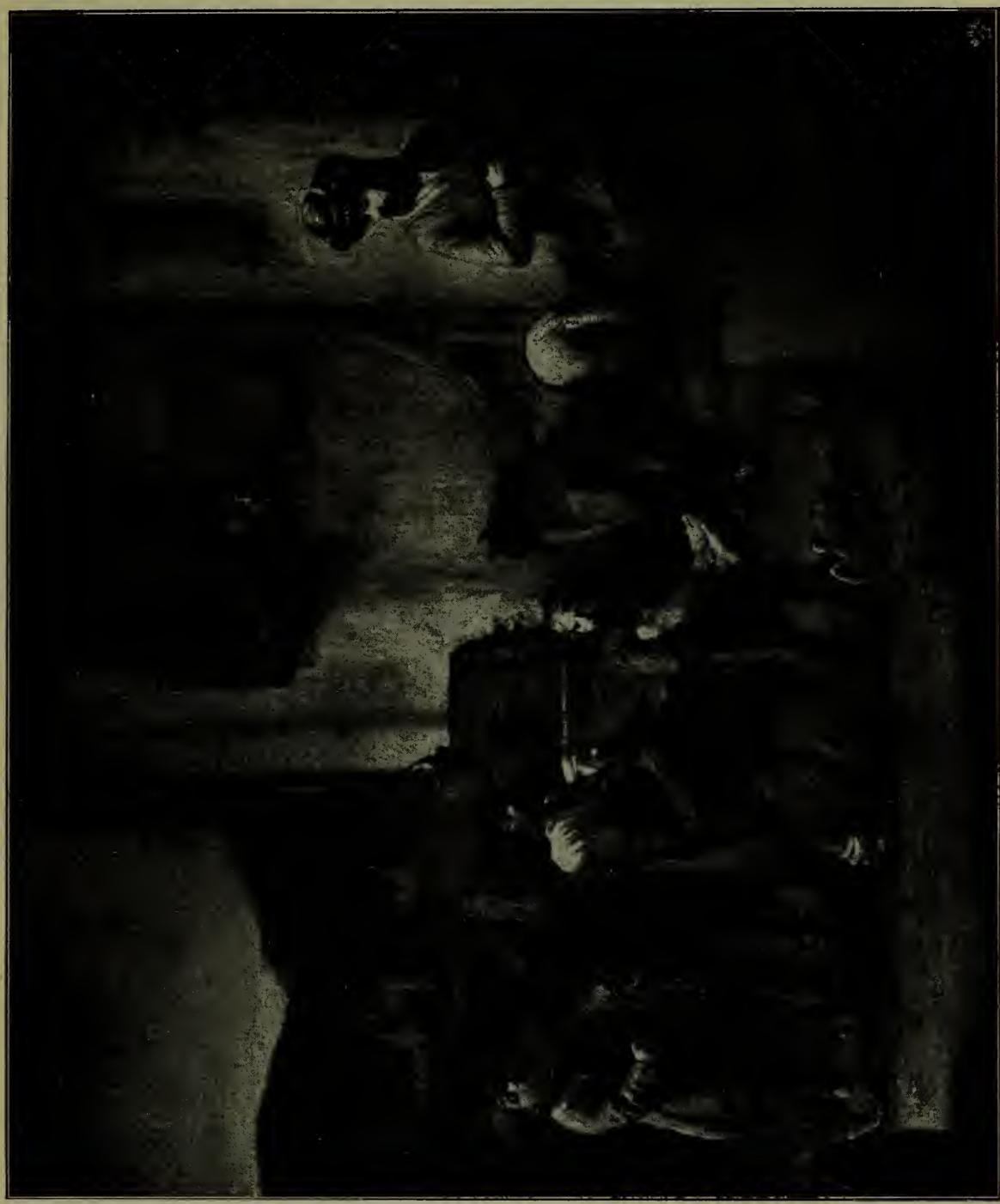


Fig. 128. THE GOOD SAMARITAN. Painting of 1648, in the Louvre.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray". One of the disciples—the traditional cut of hair and beard makes him recognisable as Peter—is for harshly repulsing the young woman who holds her baby up to Jesus. Jesus, however, extends his right hand towards her, raises the other hand to appease his disciple, and with a look of heavenly kindness utters the words: "Suffer little children, and forbid them

not to come unto me". Between the group of mothers and the Pharisees, we see a young man with long hair, in rich, embroidered raiment, sitting on the ground; he leans his face on his hand and ponders. This is the rich young man who is turning over the question, what he shall do to have eternal life, and is waiting for Jesus to depart out of the throng which surrounds him in order to put the question to him. In this way the picture gives a reference to the passage in the narrative of the Evangelist which follows what is immediately brought before us. The whole composition, so pregnant with meaning, so full of allusions and of contrasts, is the most perfect masterpiece possible of expression, and this is Rembrandt's highest achieve-



Fig. 129. THE CANAL WITH THE SWANS. Etching of 1650.

ment in the poetry of light. It is no mere sunlight that in one place envelopes the figures, almost without shadow, and in another casts its faint reflection on the groups that are emerging from darkness: it is the light of Redemption, shining on the darkness of human existence (Fig. 138).

The print was from the first one of the most famous of Rembrandt's etchings. It bears the traditional title of "The hundred guilder print". The story about the origin of this name is as follows. There came one day a print-dealer from Rome and offered to sell to Rembrandt certain engravings by Marcantonio Raimondi, for which he wanted in all a hundred guilders. Rembrandt offered him by way of payment for the engravings an impression of this plate, which he had just finished, and the dealer agreed to the bargain, whether, as the person who records the occurrence will have it,

because he wanted to lay Rembrandt under an obligation to himself, or because he was really satisfied with the exchange. Nowadays the title "Hundred guilder print" is hardly up to date; for at an auction in 1887 a fine impression of the print fetched the price of £1180.¹⁾

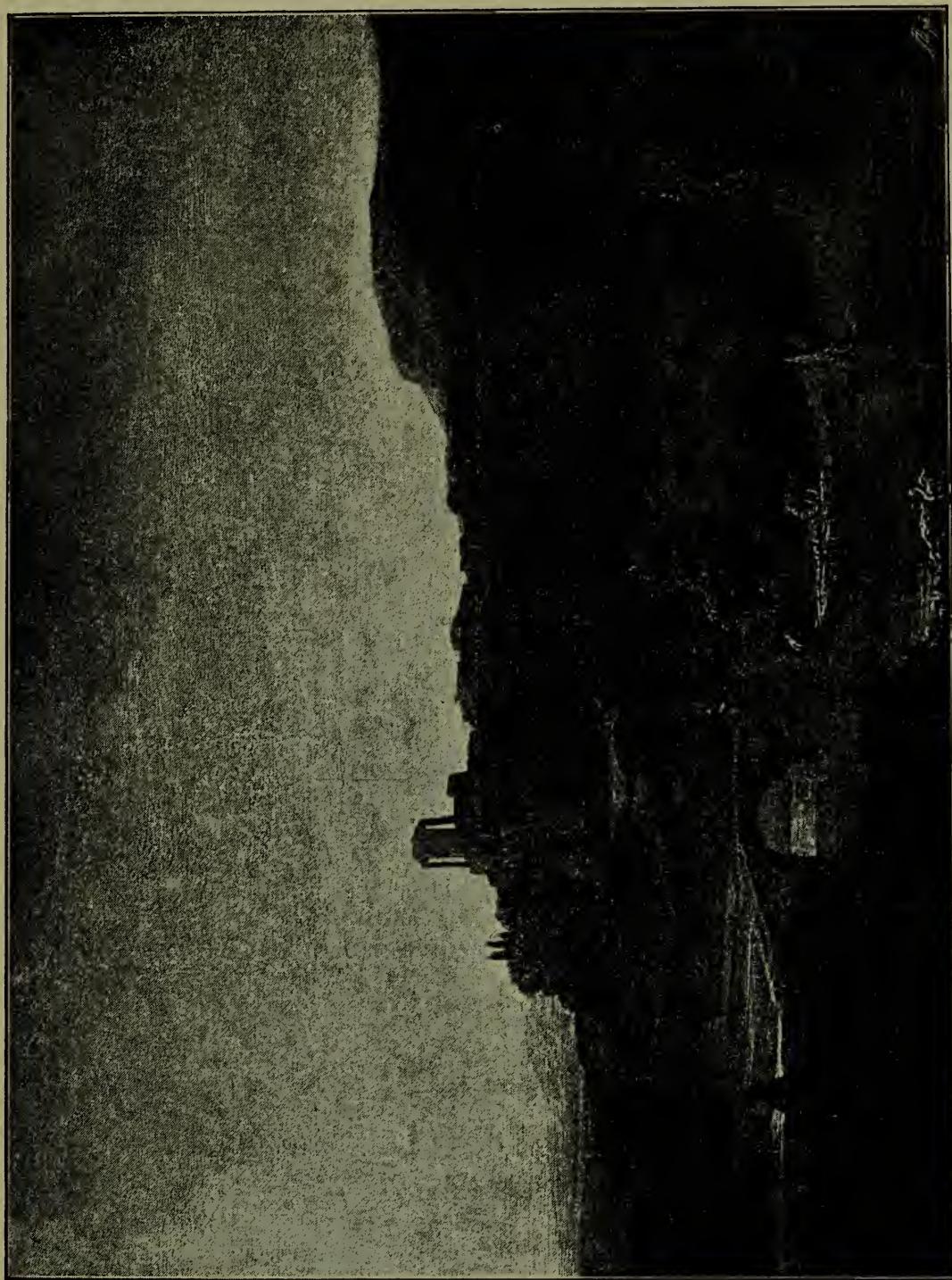


Fig. 130. LANDSCAPE WITH RUINS ON A MOUNTAIN. In the Cassel Gallery.
(From a photograph by Franz Hanfstängl, Munich.)

A number of masterly works in etching are dated 1654. Before all there is the print, doubly attractive on account of the charming simplicity

¹⁾ £1750 at the Holford sale in 1893, where two other etchings fetched still higher prices, viz. "Rembrandt with sabre and aigrette", first state, £2000, and "Ephraim Bonus", first state, "with the black ring", £1950. All three etchings were purchased by Baron Edmond de Rothschild of Paris. C. D.

of the design, which repeats with new artistic beauty the subject, which the master had already so often handled, of the manifestation of the Redeemer at Emmaus. As in the painting of 1648, so here, the artist has introduced the servant waiting, in due subordination, but with no little significance in contributing to the whole sum of the composition, in its outward form and inner meaning. The lad, wearing an innkeeper's apron, is just about to go down the steps to the cellar, when he suddenly halts, on becoming



Fig. 131. ST. JEROME, called "in the manner of Dürer". Etching.

aware that something extraordinary is passing among the guests, which is to him inexplicable; he cannot, of course, comprehend why the two men are staring with such amazement at the third, who had come with them as an equal, at the moment when he is offering a piece of bread to each of them with a gentle, kindly manner (Fig. 140). There is a very carefully executed print of St. Jerome, sitting in a quiet place out of doors, absorbed in reading the Bible. This is, once more, a masterpiece of poetical landscape; we feel the solemn repose, the sanctified peace, of this sunny

wilderness and it is unnecessary to cut short our enjoyment of the work of art by noticing that the lion, who is stretching himself so comfortably in the sun, is somewhat a failure in drawing (Fig. 141).

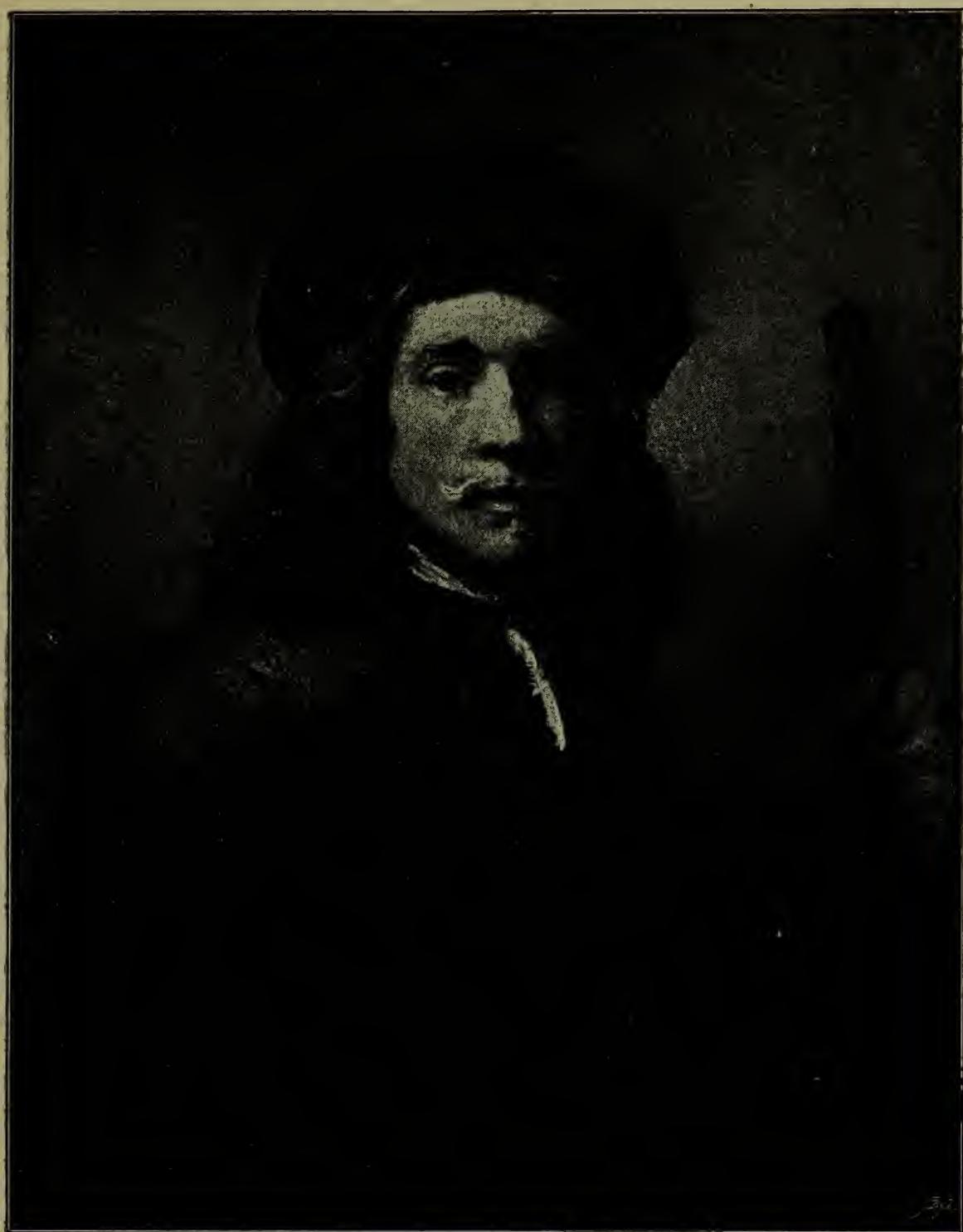


Fig. 132. PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG MAN, painted in 1651. In the Louvre.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

Even now Rembrandt did not disdain to sketch figures from everyday life on the copper-plate. The date 1654 appears on an print known by the name of "The Game of Kolef (Golf)", the subject of which is not so much the game, which is being played out of doors, as a man who sits



Fig. 133. CLEMENS DE JONGHE, Printseller. Etching of 1651.

comfortably at one side, taking no part in the action. It is a sketch from nature thrown off in a few hasty strokes. Another precious little print, equally engaging by its immediate truth to life and by its picturesque effect, may belong to the same period. A couple of poor, wandering musicians in the outer court of a house are giving a musical treat of a humble kind with hurdy-gurdy and bagpipes to a pair of peasants and their sturdy offspring in the light which comes out from the room (Fig. 142). At least we are vividly reminded of these musicians by the sight of the old shepherd with the bagpipes in the "Nativity", who leads his companions to the crib at Bethlehem in a print which, as to execution, is only drawn in rough strokes, but is perfect in feeling and wonderfully poetical both in idea and in effect (Fig. 143). This is proved to belong to the year 1654 by the date on another print of equal size, evidently carried out as a pendant to it with quite similar treatment, which represents the Circumcision of the Infant Jesus.

For a book written in Spanish by Menasseh Ben Israel, which appeared in the following year at Amsterdam under the title of "Piedra Gloriosa", Rembrandt etched four designs on one plate which reduced magnificent com-



Fig. 134. HEAD OF NICOLAES BRUYNINGH, from the painting of 1652. In the Cassel Gallery.
(From a photograph by Franz Hansstängl, Munich.)

positions, like Jacob's Dream and the Vision of Daniel, to minute dimensions.

Among the pictures of 1654 there is one which is among the master's finest works, "Joseph accused by Potiphar's wife", in the Berlin Museum.



Fig. 135. JESUS AMONG THE DOCTORS IN THE TEMPLE. Drawing in the Albertina, Vienna.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

The woman sits by the brightly-lighted bed, seeking to cover her half-exposed bosom with her left hand, while she points with the thumb of her right hand to Joseph, who looks upwards in the consciousness of innocence and lifts his hand in asseveration of it; as she brings her false accusation she looks away from her husband, who stands behind her, still concealing his growing indignation at Joseph under a mask of well-bred calm and serious consideration. Rembrandt's achievement here in the effect of colour is marvellous, and in expression it is beyond belief. "Why, what lies the woman is telling!" was the first exclamation of an observant and unprejudiced lover of art at the sight of this picture. The woman certainly does not, according to our ideas, possess seductive charms. There are two pictures of the same year, one of which, perfectly simple in its realism, shows a young woman bathing (in the National Gallery, London), while the other (in the Louvre) represents Bathsheba, just come from the bath, reading David's message with conflicting feelings. In these Rembrandt has shown even more strikingly than in the pictures of a like character painted soon after 1630, that he had no feeling for the beauty of the female form. But he knew how to idealize the undraped feminine figure in his own way, by the charm of colouring. The features of the same model who suggested both the pictures mentioned above are to be recognised in the bust of a young woman which holds a place of honour in the Salon Carré at the Louvre as one of the masterpieces of all painting

and hangs as a not unworthy neighbour to the celebrated "Gioconda" of Leonardo da Vinci.

The Cassel Gallery has a peculiar, dark picture of 1654 known as "The Sentry", the life-size, half-length portrait of a man in a full suit of steel armour, who leans with both hands on a spear and looks moodily to one side. A certain darkness begins to prevail from about this time in Rembrandt's pictures. The golden tone frequently becomes deepened to a dark brown, from which the magical lights of the master's painting shine out all the more effectively. More noticeable still is an alteration in the brush-work: the steady breadth of handling passes into a peculiar soft style of painting which loves to efface the sharp outlines of objects without depriving them at all of their definiteness.

This way of seeing things and this style of handling in the painter's work agree admirably with the way in which character is grasped and expressed in several portraits of elderly people which belong just to this period. The St. Petersburg Gallery has five portraits of old men and women dated 1654. Two half-length portraits of women are especially remarkable for the tender suggestion of a soul weary of life, but ennobled by inward peace, in the withered faces which look out from under their dark head-dresses with a peculiarly touching expression (Fig. 144). In other collections as well there are portraits of old women with a similar feeling; to match the spiritualised expression of a matron well advanced in years, she is sometimes



Fig. 136. CHRIST BEFORE CAIAPHAS. Drawing in the Albertina, Vienna.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clement & Co., Dornach and Paris.)



Fig. 137. ABRAHAM IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND TWO ANGELS. Drawing in the Albertina, Vienna.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

painted while absorbed in reading the Bible (Fig. 145). These pictures usually bear the name of "Rembrandt's Mother". The loving way in which they are treated makes such an appellation intelligible, but it is clearly wrong, both on account of the absence of resemblance to the earlier portraits of Rembrandt's mother and by reason of the date at which the pictures were painted.

A portrait of the master by himself painted in 1654 (or 1655, for the last figure is indistinct), also dark in tone, is in the Cassel Gallery. This picture, with the features surrounded by darkness, makes us aware that Rembrandt was then already aged beyond his years. But his creative energy remained fresh and unabated.

In 1655 Rembrandt devoted several splendid etchings to the Passion of Christ. Pilate exhibiting the patient Sufferer in bonds to the shouting, scornful mob from the terrace of the Praetorium, is the subject of an impressive print, which produces a most curious and striking effect by the peculiar way in which it is executed, for the figures are drawn almost wholly in mere outline, with masterly skill, and black shadows are interposed here and there, especially in the architecture. A print with numerous figures and a strangely magnificent and romantic effect of light exhibits the Redeemer on the Cross, between the two thieves, transfigured by floods of light from above. He is an object of mockery or indifferent talk to the mob who are preparing to quit the place of execution; his faithful followers mourn for him with unspeakable grief, and the centurion, heathen as he is, falls on his knees in deep emotion to adore him. But the crowning point is reached in the Deposition from the Cross, perhaps the



Fig. 138. CHRIST HEALING THE SICK. Eteling, known as the "Hundred Guilder Print".

most poetical design that Rembrandt ever created. It is called "with the torch", because the bright light which centres on the immediate surroundings of the body, already taken down and borne upon a linen sheet spread out to



Fig. 139. CHRIST PREACHING. Etching.

receive it, finds, in this case, a natural explanation in a torch which is held in the direction of the body. In the foreground, where the earth is covered with trampled grass and wet with dew, Joseph of Arimathea is spreading a second sheet of linen over the bier which stands prepared. The night is

perfectly dark; only the most elevated buildings of Jerusalem shimmer in the distance, in a subdued light of which the source is hidden from us (Fig. 146). His preoccupation with the atoning death of Christ may have led the master to represent once more its type in the Old Testament, the Sacrifice of Isaac. At the moment which he has selected, Abraham, who has laid aside his head-covering and mantle, is using one hand to close the eyes of his son, who kneels, stript of his raiment, and bends as patiently as a lamb, with neck stretched out ready for the sacrifice, across his father's



FIG. 140. CHRIST AND THE DISCIPLES AT EMMAUS. Etching of 1654.

knee. Holding the drawn knife in his other hand, Abraham is just about to perform the hardest part of his duty and to shed the blood of his beloved child into the dish which lies on the ground; but at this moment an angel flies down in a ray of light which breaks through the cloud of mist upon the mountain-top, and stays the patriarch's hand from the back. Under the right wing of the angel the ram, caught by the horns in the thicket, is perceived in the shade; on one side the ass and the two servants who were left behind are seen on the slope of the mountain, and in the far distance two men are perceived who are climbing the side of the opposite

hill (Fig. 147). In the following year Rembrandt turned once more to the story of Abraham to produce a remarkable design of his reception of the three celestial visitors. The patriarch, who holds the wine-jug ready to serve his guests from another world, listens in a submissive posture to the words of the Lord, who sits at his table in the guise of a venerable old man; the two attendants of Jehovah are recognisable by their wings as angels, but are represented as men of mature years, not as youths, according



Fig. 141. ST. JEROME. Etching of 1654.

to Rembrandt's earlier custom, and this combination of bearded faces and angels' wings seems very odd to us; it is true that the scripture speaks of men, not youths. Sarah listens furtively behind the door of the house and smiles incredulously at the promise of a son; outside the door Hagar's son Ishmael, the future progenitor of the Arabs, is practising with his bow (Fig. 148).

Rembrandt produced one of his most masterly portrait-etchings in 1656, the incomparably picturesque and lifelike print of the famous goldsmith Janus Lutma of Groningen, who appears as an amiable old gentleman,



Fig. 142. STROLLING MUSICIANS. Etching.

sitting comfortably in an arm-chair surrounded by the implements of his craft (Fig. 149). In the same year the master painted a splendid portrait of his old friend Six, which is still in the possession of the latter's descendants at Amsterdam. A no less celebrated portrait is that of Dr. Tholinx, in a private collection at Paris. Rembrandt did another portrait of the same person a little later on in an etching worthy to rank with the portrait of Lutma, of which it may be mentioned that an impression was sold in England in 1883 for £ 15 10*), at that time probably the highest price which had ever been paid for a print. An interesting example of Rembrandt's change of manner in painting is the fine portrait of an architect, sitting in meditation, in the Cassel Gallery. The soft handling is clearly observable even in the small photographic reproduction (Fig. 150).

The Cassel Gallery possesses a biblical painting with life-sized figures of the same year, 1656, which is remarkable alike for the quiet beauty of colour which pervades the whole in soft tones, and for the grand simplicity with which the scene of patriarchal family life is depicted. The subject is "Jacob blessing his grandchildren". The venerable old man

*) At the Griffiths Sale. The purchaser was Baron Edmond de Rothschild. C. D.

lies on a bed with a dull red canopy, the subdued colour of which shows up wonderfully the greyish golden tone of the rest of the picture; he wears a light-coloured jacket and a little white and yellow cap; a fox-skin mantle is laid across his shoulders to guard them from a chill as he gathers his forces once more to raise himself up. His son Joseph, whose head is covered with a large turban, stands near him; he supports his father and tries reverently and carefully to guide the hand of the aged man, so nigh to death, from the blond curly head of Ephraim, who receives the blessing respectfully and with full understanding, to that of the dark-haired Manasseh, the first-born. Joseph's wife Asnath stands close by, wearing an olive-coloured dress, a cap and veil; her eyes rest affectionately on the children and she seems also to be looking into a distant future as she follows Jacob's words of promise (Fig. 151). The features of this woman, here so ennobled by beauty of expression, resemble those of the portrait already mentioned in the Salon Carré at the Louvre, and it is supposed that we have here a portrait of the person who stood nearest to Rembrandt at this time.

The loneliness of his home after the death of Saskia may well have become gradually more than he could bear. He had had a good deal of trouble with the old nurse to whom the rearing of the young Titus had been entrusted, and had been obliged to seek the aid of the law-courts



Fig. 143. THE NATIVITY. Etching.



Fig. 144. PORTRAIT OF AN OLD WOMAN, painted in 1654. In the Hermitage, St. Petersburg.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

to get rid of her extravagant claims. Then in the autumn of 1649 he had received into his house Hendrikje Stoffels, a young girl of rustic origin, who could only make three crosses instead of signing her name; by degrees this girl became more and more dear to Rembrandt, and she was soon allowed to consider herself as the successor of Saskia in the stately house in the Breestraat.



Fig. 145. PORTRAIT OF AN OLD WOMAN. In the Collection of the Duke of Buccleuch, London.
(From a mezzotint by James Mc. Ardell.)

We get exact information as to the appearance of this house in a document of the year 1656. Even in the entrance-hall, the walls were covered with pictures, among them many studies—landscapes, animals, heads and other subjects—by the master himself, with several genre pictures by the famous pupil of Rubens, Adriaen Brouwer, and landscapes by Jan Lievensz and Hercules Seghers; besides these the hall contained figures of children in plaster and a plaster bust; the chairs were partly covered with black cushions, and partly upholstered in leather. In the anteroom hung some fifty pictures, not only works by Rembrandt, and various contemporary

Dutch and Flemish painters, but also some of Italian origin, one by Palma Vecchio and one attributed to Raphael; among the master's own works a large "Descent from the Cross" in a richly gilt frame was the most important. A mirror in an ebony frame, a walnut table with a valuable cloth, seven Spanish chairs with green velvet cushions and a marble wine-cooler completed the furniture of the anteroom. An adjoining room was more simply furnished, but also decorated with pictures on the walls; besides pictures and sketches by the master of the house and his contemporaries, there were also works of the old masters of the Netherlands, including the head of an old man by Van Eyck; the same room contained copies after Annibale Carracci and after Rembrandt, the latter, perhaps, presented to him by the pupils who had painted them. In the saloon, works of Giorgione and Raphael held a place of honour, surrounded by Dutch pictures, of which most again were by Rembrandt himself, but one by his teacher, Lastman; the table was of oak, the table-cloth embroidered, the chairs covered with blue cushions. Here, too, stood the bed, with blue curtains drawn round it; a linen-chest of cedar-wood and a press of the same material betokened the domain of the housekeeper. A special room was used as the cabinet of art. Here were statues and heads of Roman emperors, one or two of which may have been real antiques, together with Indian vases and Chinese porcelain figures, a steel suit of armour and several helmets, also a Japanese helmet and implements used by barbarous races, with globes, mineral and zoological specimens, and a number of plaster casts from life, including the cast of a negro. On a set of shelves there were a number of shells and marine growths, casts of natural objects and many other curiosities. There were weapons of many kinds, a precious shield of iron ornamented with figures, a death-mask of Maurice, Prince of Orange, and a sculptured group of a lion with an ox. A carved and gilt bedstead stood in the same room. But the richest treasures were concealed in portfolios. Several of these were quite full of engravings by Rembrandt's celebrated fellow-countryman, Lucas van Leyden, others with Marcantonio's prints after Raphael; one contained the works of Andrea Mantegna, another the woodcuts and engravings of Lucas Cranach, a whole chest was filled with the works of Martin Schongauer, Israhel van Meckenem, Hans Brosamer and Holbein; there were also a collection of engravings after nearly all the pictures of Titian, and many after Michelangelo. We see that Rembrandt had a thorough knowledge of the great masters of the Renaissance, but he was too independent to allow himself to be influenced by them. He possessed a collection of prints of the monuments of Roman architecture, but never made use of them in his own compositions; it is more possible that the collection of oriental subjects, engraved by Melchior Lorch and others, which filled one portfolio, was occasionally used by him, but only from a distance, so to speak, and in the freest manner possible. The number of portfolios in which he kept other engravings by and after celebrated masters of the Dutch and Italian schools, both earlier and

contemporary, was extremely large; Rembrandt knew and valued the works of other artists of his own day, however different their manner might be from his own.

Part of the collection of prints was not arranged in portfolios, but was kept out, to be conveniently looked at, in Chinese and Indian baskets. Of course, Rembrandt's own etchings were not omitted from the collection;



Fig. 146. THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS "WITH THE TORCH". Etching, 1655.

Van Vliet's prints after pictures by Rembrandt had a special box to themselves. After the engravings came the drawings, the carefully arranged studies and sketches of the master himself, studies by Lastman, classified according to the style of workmanship, pen drawings and red-chalk drawings being kept apart, and so with other masters. In this cabinet, which contained many other things besides, a closet full of plates, a collection of fans, a stuffed bird of paradise, and a variety of other objects, Rembrandt's library was also kept. This was not a large one; it consisted of an old Bible,



Fig. 147. ABRAHAM'S SACRIFICE. Etching, 1655.

Six's tragedy of "Medea", Dürer's treatise on proportion, several books in German, which were there, most likely, only for the sake of their wood-cuts, and fifteen volumes not precisely described. In the anteroom to the cabinet there were also pictures of various kinds, works of plastic art and framed engravings. This room was connected with the studio, which consisted of two working-rooms, large and small. The small one was divided into several sections, fitted up in most varied ways; the first was adorned with old arquebuses and blow-pipes, the second with muskets and with bows and arrows, javelins and clubs from India; the third contained drums and fifes, the fourth, plaster casts of hands and heads, as well as a harp and a Turkish bow; the fifth included casts of natural objects, bows, cross-bows, old helmets and shields and a collection of antlers, also a number of statues and busts, some of which passed for antiques, a small cannon, a collection of old variegated stuffs, seven stringed instruments and two small paintings by Rembrandt. In the large studio were kept halberds, swords and Indian fans, complete Indian costumes, a wooden trumpet, a large helmet and five cuirasses, a picture of two Moors by Rembrandt and a figure of a child—whether painted or carved, we are not told—by Michelangelo. The landing outside the studio was decorated with two lions' skins, a large picture representing Diana, and a study of a



Fig. 148. ABRAHAM ENTERTAINING JEHOVAH. Etching, 1656.

bittern. Ten pictures by the master, large and small, adorned a small apartment, in which there was a wooden bed. The contents of the kitchen and the passage would be less interesting to the reader.

It is a melancholy document to which we are indebted for this glimpse into the interior of Rembrandt's dwelling. It is the inventory of the master's moveable property, taken by the officers of the bankruptcy court with a view to public auction. Rembrandt must at all periods have enjoyed a considerable income; he himself declared in court, at the time of his marriage with Saskia, when he was accused of extravagance, that he had an ample provision of property. But he spent his money open-handed; when Saskia was no longer there to receive present after present of jewellery, the amateur's passion for collecting swallowed up all the revenues of the artist; even the not inconsiderable fortune which Saskia left him was not sufficient.

Since the beginning of 1653 Rembrandt had borrowed several large sums which he was not able to repay when they fell due, and so in the summer of 1656 he found himself in the evil plight of being declared bankrupt. In May 1656, when he foresaw that this result was inevitable, Rembrandt transferred the right of ownership in his house to his son Titus, who was still a minor, in order to make some provision at least for him,

in addition to his moiety of Saskia's fortune. But after the greater part of his goods and chattels had been sold, towards the end of 1657, and the remainder of his prints and drawings been dispersed in a second auction some time later, his house, too, was put up for sale in January 1658. This led to a prolonged lawsuit between the guardian of the young Titus and Rembrandt's creditors. It was not till 1665 that the case was finally



Fig. 149. JANUS LUTMA, famous goldsmith at Groningen. Etching, 1656.

decided in favour of the former and Titus van Ryn came into complete possession of the property which came to him by inheritance from his mother.

When Rembrandt's house was cleared of its contents, he found shelter, with Titus, Hendrikje and a little daughter Cornelia, whom the latter had presented to him in October 1654, in the Crown Imperial inn (Keizerskroon), and it was there that the auction of his property took place.

In order to enable the master to live for his work with as much freedom from anxiety as was possible under these circumstances, Hendrikje

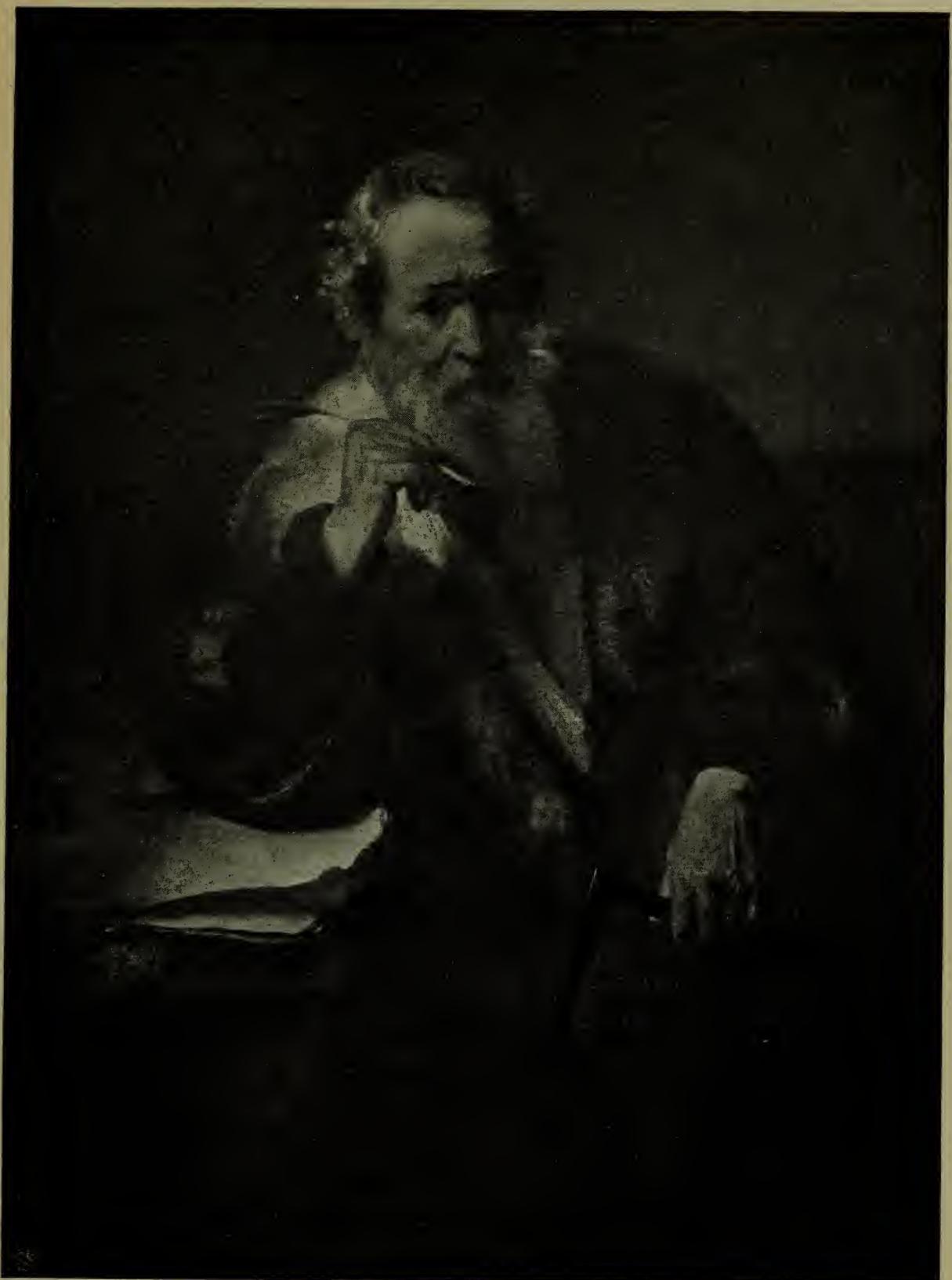


Fig. 150. PORTRAIT OF AN ARCHITECT, painted in 1656. In the Cassel Gallery.
(From a photograph by Franz Hanfstängl, Munich.)

set up a business to deal in pictures, prints, woodcuts and curiosities, in partnership with Titus, who had made some attempts at painting, but without much success. On the 15th December 1660 this partnership in business was concluded in all due form before a notary and two witnesses, and it was expressly declared that Rembrandt was to remain, with free board and lodging, and live with the partners in the firm, to whom he was to make himself useful so far as possible.

In such a deplorable situation Rembrandt did not lose either the courage or the power to work. In the room of an inn, where he lived in a miserable way on credit—the bill at the Crown Imperial which he paid in 1660 is still preserved—and, later, in hired lodgings, which he was continually changing after a short residence, robbed of everything which had furnished his studio with comfort and decoration, he continued to produce the most splendid works. In the fatal year of 1656 he painted, in addition to the pictures already mentioned, a counterpart to his former Anatomy Lesson for the Guild of Surgeons; this picture, unfortunately, was destroyed by fire in the eighteenth century, with the exception of a small, damaged fragment which is preserved in the Amsterdam Museum. Moreover a “Denial of St. Peter” in the Hermitage at St. Petersburg belongs in all probability to this year.

In the following year he produced a picture of wonderful effect, the “Adoration of the Magi”, at Buckingham Palace. The Virgin sits in a humble and modest posture before the stable, and holds out the Child, who is brightly illumined with rays of heavenly light, towards the eldest of the three kings, who has knelt down along with two of his retainers, and bends his brow to the child’s feet as he presents his offering. Joseph keeps quite modestly in the shade under the thatched roof of the stable. The second king takes from the hands of a page, whom he motions aside with a silent gesture, the precious gift which he is about to offer. The third, with a gesture of astonishment at finding the new-born monarch in such poor surroundings, steps out of darkness into the light, the reflection of which makes the gold and jewels flash on his own rich kingly apparel. The figures of the retinue, the umbrella-bearers, and the other sumptuously attired people who have found their way to this shed under the guidance of heaven, are lost in the darkness of the night. The magical effect of light makes the picture one of the most charming of Rembrandt’s works. Hardly any other of the great masters has been able to express such a fervent devotion as he displayed by the two figures who kneel before the Infant Jesus. The like may perhaps be found in the most earnest pictures of the late Gothic period, but nowhere else (Fig. 152).

The master’s own portrait of the year 1657 is in the Dresden Gallery; one seems to catch a slight smile quivering on the painter’s lips; so long as he knows himself to be in full possession of his art, he can smile at every mishap. Then, again, the pose of his head is erect and dignified in the splendid portrait of himself, to be dated, perhaps, a year later, in the

Pinakothek at Munich (Fig. 153). There is a masterly piece of portrait-painting in the bust of a young man with long curls in the Louvre, of 1658.

This is the date of an etching of Christ and the Woman of Samaria at the well. A pen and Indian ink drawing in the Albertina agrees so far with this etching, from which it differs as completely with regard to com-



Fig. 151. JACOB BLESSING HIS GRANDSONS EPHRAIM AND MANASSEH. Painting of 1656 in the Cassel Gallery.

(From a photograph by Franz Hanfstaengl, Munich.)

position as it does from the early etching of the same subject, that a picturesque and imaginative landscape contributes greatly to the general effect (Fig. 154).

About this time, however, the master began to lose his taste for etching, though he produced a very effective print in 1659, representing Peter healing the man lame from his birth under the Beautiful Gate of the Temple (Fig. 156).



Fig. 152. THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI. Painting of 1657 at Buckingham Palace.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

The Berlin Museum possesses a biblical picture of 1659, "Jacob wrestling with the Angel". Another picture in the same place, "Moses dashing to pieces the Tables of the Law", is of about the same date. There is a masterly portrait of 1659, a half-length of an old man, in the National Gallery, London.

In 1660 the master painted himself in his working clothes, his grey hair covered with a white cloth, and his palette in his hand; his skin is furrowed, but his eyes still shine, full of life, under his brows. The Louvre possesses this admirable likeness, which throws into the shade even the older portrait of the master by himself in the same collection.

In the following year he completed the most perfect of all his works, the portrait-group of the managers ("Syndics", as they are called), of the Drapers' Guild at Amsterdam. As he had produced the best work of his



Fig. 153. PORTRAIT OF REMBRANDT BY HIMSELF, painted about 1658. In the Pinakothek, Munich.
(From a photograph by Franz Hanfstängl, Munich.)

early period in the Anatomy Lesson, and that of his period of prosperity in the Night Watch, so too in old age he once more crowned his other achievements by a corporation-picture. But whereas in the first picture



Fig. 154. CHRIST AND THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA. Drawing in the Albertina, Vienna.
(From a photograph by Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.)

he had aimed at the strictest fidelity to nature, whilst he had attempted in the second to make a poetical picture out of a subject commonplace in itself, he now united both sides of his accomplishment in the maturity of his power. He produced a picture as natural and free from affectation as possible, with a simple, even light, without surrendering in the least the charm of colour of which he alone possessed the secret; he composed a poem in colour, without doing anything to spoil his convincing fidelity to life. In this picture, so magnificent in its simplicity, Rembrandt said the last word of his art. At a table covered with an oriental cloth, the ground of which is red, sit four gentlemen, engaged in auditing the accounts, while a fifth is just rising from his chair. All five are dressed alike, in black coats, broad white collars and black felt hats; behind them stands a servant, bare-headed, also in a black coat and white collar; the wall of the room is panelled with brown wood. Out of these few colours the master has made a picture of indescribable harmony; every object has its plain and definite local colour, yet the whole is saturated, as it were, with a brownish-golden tone. An appearance of substantiality is realised in the highest possible degree, and there is no doubt about the speaking resemblance

of the portrait of each one of the persons who appear. They live before our eyes (Fig. 155). The picture was originally hung in the "Staalhof"; now it is one of the ornaments of the Ryksmuseum at Amsterdam, where



Fig. 155. THE SYNDICS OF THE GUILD OF DRAPERS (DE STAALGASTEN).
Painting of 1661 in the Ryksmuseum, Amsterdam.

it throws into the shade even the most excellent portraits by other masters.

The last date which occurs on an etching by Rembrandt is 1661. This last dated work of his needle is the portrait of his friend Coppenol, now

a man of sixty-two, whom he had already portrayed several times in the course of his life on canvas or on copper.

The Louvre has a picture of the same year, painted with an almost audacious mastery, representing the Evangelist St. Matthew. In the same gallery is a painting of rather later date, of a portly and well-dressed Dutch woman with a little boy on her lap; the boy has wings on his shoulders, and by this we observe that Venus and Cupid are the persons represented. This, his last mythological picture, is the final proof that Rembrandt had no notion of painting such a subject. But he proved himself once more a consummate painter of biblical subjects in a striking picture, with life-sized figures, of the Return of the Prodigal Son (in the Hermitage, St. Petersburg). The Van der Hoop Museum at Amsterdam contains a picture of 1662, splendid in its colouring, of which the subject is not easy to understand. It goes by the name of "The Jewish Bride", and represents a handsomely-dressed young woman, whom an elderly man of dignified bearing approaches with an affectionate demeanour. A certain excitement, one might almost say, is betrayed by the manner in which these pictures of the last years of Rembrandt's life are handled; one might suppose that the master, who had striven so conscientiously after perfection his whole life long, and had made continual progress, was seeking by unexampled



Fig. 156. PETER AND JOHN AT THE BEAUTIFUL GATE OF THE TEMPLE. Etching, 1659.



Fig. 157. PORTRAIT OF REMBRANDT BY HIMSELF TOWARDS THE CLOSE OF HIS LIFE.

In the collection of the Duke of Buccleuch, London. (From a mezzotint by Richard Earlom.)

audacities of painting to find some possibility of a further advance, though he could not exceed the perfection of the "Syndics".

This is very striking in the large and beautiful family-group, the portraits of a husband, wife and three children, in the Brunswick Museum. The portrait of a woman in the National Gallery, London, and that of the poet Jeremias de Decker in the Hermitage are dated 1666. The latter was an old friend of Rembrandt's; nearly thirty years before he had written a sonnet in praise of Rembrandt's picture, "Christ appearing to the Magdalen",

now at Buckingham Palace; now, too, he thanked the master in a poem for the likeness which the latter had painted, "for friendship, not for gain", and praised the fame which Rembrandt had won "in spite of Envy, wicked brute!"

Once more the master proved his inexhaustible freshness of thought and keenness of observation in a series of portraits of himself with which he brought his career as an artist to a close (Fig. 157). The striking picture of "Christ at the Column" in the collection at the Grand-Ducal Palace at Darmstadt passes for his last work. The date on it is read as 1668, but it is doubtful whether 1658 ought not rather to be read.

Hendrikje Stoffels had probably died soon after 1661, and her little daughter Cornelia does not seem to have outlived her childhood. Rembrandt lost his son Titus, who had only recently married, in September, 1668. He himself had contracted a fresh marriage with Catharina van Wyck, by whom he had two more children. The master's laborious life, which had been brightened by fame and brilliant success and then clouded by the hard dealings of destiny, came to a close in the autumn of 1669. The list of burials in the Westerkerk at Amsterdam records his funeral as occurring on the 8th October 1669.

It is remarkable how soon the story of his life was lost in obscurity. A mixture of anecdotes derived from the pupils in his studio, and ill-natured calumnies which originated in the same circle, had to serve for a biography till the researches of Dutch scholars in the nineteenth century brought truth to light from the original documents. His reputation as an artist, however, was too great to be affected by envy. The best masters of the art of engraving exerted themselves to reproduce Rembrandt's paintings. Mezzotint, especially, a style of engraving which was invented in Germany towards the end of the Thirty Years War, and immediately rose to great popularity, especially in England, was found a very suitable means of rendering his effects of chiaroscuro. Some of our illustrations (Fig. 101, 108, 121, 145, 157) are taken from such mezzotint engravings by English and German artists of the eighteenth century. In the second half of that period, the greatest engraver of the time, G. F. Schmidt, engraver to the King of Prussia, reproduced numerous pictures by Rembrandt in etchings which imitated Rembrandt's own manner of etching. In spite of the excellence of these etchings, they do not reproduce Rembrandt's works with absolute fidelity; that period was not sufficiently free from prejudice to be able to enter without reserve into the spirit of another age; it strikes us, especially, that G. F. Schmidt, like a true child of his age, did not understand the simple naturalness of expression which seems to us to-day one of Rembrandt's chief titles to fame as an artist; the eighteenth century artist, unintentionally, no doubt, has almost always put a theatrical expression into the eyes of Rembrandt's people, which is absolutely foreign to the original. To make the master's scattered works generally known by reproductions of undisputed accuracy is a task, which

has been reserved for photography in its modern perfection. In addition to the splendid photographic reproductions of the treasures of single collections which have recently appeared—the photographs of F. Hanfstängl of Munich from the pictures in the Cassel Gallery demand a special mention—the publications of the firm of Braun & Co. of Dornach (Alsace) are the most important.

These publishers have sought out the chief works of Rembrandt, as of Raphael, Holbein and other masters, in the various collections of Europe, from Madrid to St. Petersburg, from London to Naples, and reproduced them in photographs which cannot be bettered. It is a special merit of this firm that they have also photographed the master's drawings, and so made accessible to the public a treasure which was previously almost unknown. An acquaintance with Rembrandt's drawings is of the greatest interest nowadays, when this master is prized more than ever. It can be said of Rembrandt that his fame has constantly increased, for we need not attach too much importance to the opinions of individual connoisseurs of the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century who failed to understand, still more to feel, the merits of a painter, to whom it was certainly impossible to apply a standard of criticism which regarded the imitation of the antique as the foundation of all art.

Comparing Rembrandt with his older partners in glory, it must be said that admiration was accorded to him the more readily, because at the beginning of the period in which he flourished the last of the painters who could be put in the same rank with him were dead—for the two great masters of the Spanish school who lived in his time did not count, since they remained quite unknown outside their native country; because comparisons and partisanship, which are the bane of all enjoyment of art, were thus avoided, and because no one has come after him whose name can be mentioned in the same breath with his. He was the last of the painters who can be called really great.

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